

AMERICA'S AIRMAN: DAVID DEPTULA AND THE AIRPOWER MOMENT

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APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the air-minded ideas of Lieutenant General David A. Deptula and his legacy as an iconic Airman. The author uses Deptula's career to outline his trajectory and understanding of airpower ideas in the context of the modern global environment. His concepts apply across all domains and his air-minded thinking is about taking advantage, while at the same time recognizing the limitations, of cognitive approaches to modern warfare and its weapons. Based on foundational principles, his air-minded thinking today continues to embody the radical paradigm shifting so necessary to ensure continued national defense. The lasting effect of Deptula is a further evolution of air-minded thinking in an effort to maximize effects to achieve policy ends at minimum cost.



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Introduction

This paper examines the influence of Lieutenant General David A. Deptula as an air-minded thinker. For the United States Air Force and its antecedents, iconic airmen have occasionally emerged to shape and influence thinking for generations by challenging others to examine anew military aviation, combat, and war. Men such as Giulio Douhet and William Mitchell from an earlier age, and John Boyd and John Warden from more recent times, have exemplified this iconic influence. So too, does Deptula.

His youth and early career nurtured an inquisitive mind and an expansive aperture of thought, at a time when many Air Force officers and most junior pilots only concentrated on the tactical tasks before them. In the late 1980s and when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, opportunity made him perhaps the most influential lieutenant colonel in modern Air Force history. Deptula leveraged this influence to stake out a view of, and role for, airpower in the decade after the Cold War, helping make the last years of the last century a shining moment for American airpower's efficacy in the pursuit of national objectives. Yet, when the September 2001 terror attacks dramatically changed the political and strategic landscape for the second time in ten years, Deptula's efforts to extend his thinking into a new era met with less success, partly because the ideas themselves proved imperfectly transferable, and partly because other military leaders retreated toward older, more traditional forms of warfare. Still, by the time he retired in 2010, Deptula's ideas had transformed the way theorists and practitioners alike thought of airpower and military force, whether these other leaders tracked toward or away from any particular Deptulism.

Deptula wrote more than nearly any other senior Airman of his generation, both under his name and at the behest of those senior to him. His pen is everywhere in *Global Reach- Global Power*, the seminal document that refocused the Air Force vision after the Cold War. Later in the 1990s, his writing on parallel warfare and effect-based targeting formed perhaps the core of his ideas. In these essays, he championed 1) the parallel, cumulative, and simultaneous attacks on enemy systems and 2) implored others to relate war's product—destruction—to war's purpose—embodied in political aims. Mostly, he

wanted others to think less of the destructive capacity of airpower and more of the effects airpower can have on an enemy's strategic decision making—effects that could often be had via destruction, but focused against key systems to gain effective control on their ability to function. In this way, Deptula fused the kinetic and non-kinetic aspects of airpower, and carved out a more prominent, integrated role for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance in the conduct of military operations. Through it all, certain notions came to be Deptula's intellectual calling cards: the indivisibility of airpower and, indeed, all military operations; the operational and strategic effect of parallel warfare; effects-based targeting; and a view of joint operations that rested not on some calculus of equitable service participation in any given operation but on delivering the right force, at the right place, and at the right time.

In all this, Deptula was extraordinarily successful, but not perfect. His ideas found ready reception and fertile ground in the 1990s, as the nation carved out a new strategic posture of engagement and enlargement in the aftermath of the Cold War. But he, and his notions, found the strategic environment following the terror attacks of 2001 less conducive, not because he had changed or his ideas lacked substance or credibility, but because the political landscape of war in Iraq and Afghanistan persuaded many other leaders to conduct a more traditional form of war. This trend Deptula deplored, believing it a retreat into older, less effective means of combat, which denied a modern ability to fight wars smarter, better, faster, and at less cost. It is too soon to judge whether he was right or wrong in this regard, but not too soon to chronicle the far-reaching, profound effect David Deptula has had on airpower thinking and the conduct of American warfare.

This thesis uses secondary sources selectively and is primarily based upon personal interviews with Deptula, his professional notes and published writing, and his personal military file, which includes his officer performance reports, many of which are reported here for the first time. The structure of the paper follows Deptula's career. Chapter one recounts his childhood and junior military experiences. He looked to the heavens from his earliest days of youth, and developed a favorable view of technological advancement. His undergraduate degree in astronomy and graduate degree in systems engineering fused a liberal curriculum to a scientific approach in a way that foreshadowed his ideas of the indivisibility of airpower. As a young airmen, Deptula's

experience in the Pacific theater stressed speed, range, and mobile lethality in ways that were quite different than the land attrition models then in favor for war in central Europe. In the Air Force Legislative Liaison directorate, Deptula was introduced to the clash between military desires for the efficient use of force and political imperatives for the effective use of force. Deptula came to believe the Air Force needed less emphasis on the latter and more on the former, an idea he carried with great effect when he became an action officer working for the Secretary of the Air Force. There, on the eve of the first Iraq War, Deptula first exhibited a strategic mind that melded the diverse ideas of early air strategists with the modern security environment.

Chapter two chronicles the development of core Deptula ideas such as parallel warfare and effects-based targeting. Using his integral part in the great success of the Gulf War as a springboard, Deptula worked out these central beliefs in a series of school and staff assignments in the years after Saddam Hussein's defeat. In his first published work, *Firing for Effect: Change in the Nature of Warfare*, Deptula outlined how stealth, precision, and effects-based targeting challenged cognitive approaches to war and the conduct of combat based on annihilation or attrition models of war.

The promise of swift military victory or precise military effect found eager political reception in the strategic environment of the mid-1990s. As Deptula rose to ranks rarely held by iconic airmen in the past, chapter three recounts how numerous military operations, from Deny Flight, to Deliberate Force, to Allied Force, and to Southern and Northern Watch, embodied his ideas, whether or not he himself was an actor in those operations.

For the second time in Deptula's career, the geo-political environment changed dramatically following the attacks of September 11, 2001. Chapter four outlines the operational success Deptula experienced as a senior participant in Operation Enduring Freedom, as well as his essay *Direct Attack: Enhancing Counterland Doctrine and Joint Air-Ground Operation*, in which he outlined the asymmetric advantage of airpower working with small special forces on the ground. The chapter also recounts some of the difficulties his ideas encountered as the decade lengthened. Shortly after the terror attacks, he authored *Air Force Transformation: Past, Present, and Future*, which laid out how the Air Force had changed since the end of the Cold War, the lessons of the 1990s,

and where the Air Force needed to focus its technologies, concepts, and organizations for the future. In addition, he published *Effects Based Operations: Change in the Nature of Warfare*, to recast his ideas against a joint canvas. Unfortunately, in this document Deptula conflated parallel warfare with effects-based approaches, which led to some diminishment of his core ideas. Although Deptula witnessed personal success as a senior leader in the 2000s, and affected important reforms in the Air Force intelligence community as its commander, his central beliefs about war in general and air war in particular lost some traction, leaving his enduring legacy as an airpower thinker unclear as he retired from the Air Force in 2010.

This is unsurprising. It took decades for the full effect of Douhet or Mitchell's ideas to become clear; and the influence of Boyd and Warden are still unsettled. For now, the effect of Deptula's ideas is the continued evolution of air-minded thinking in an effort to maximize effects to achieve policy ends at minimum cost. As an iconic Airman, defined here as an Airman whose ideas mattered more than his leadership or command, Deptula rose in rank more than most, and has had, at first blush anyway, as great of an effect as others on the development of airpower thinking. As for Deptula's lasting influence on air-minded thinking and war, only the passage of time can tell us more.

Chapter 1

The Airman

Seek the path of honor, the light of truth, and the will to
work for mankind.

Thomas Jefferson

Lieutenant General David Deptula possessed tactical expertise, led joint operations on multiple occasions, excelled during six Pentagon staff assignments, and conceptualized a strategic view of airpower and military force as one piece to achieve political ends. He was an elite Airman at the tactical level and a brilliant contributor to strategic ideas at the policy level. In both successes, he was nurtured by his family, near hearth and home, and by the Air Force, which recognized early enough his talents and moved him along a series of junior assignments, setting him up for even greater achievement as a senior leader.

Deptula's earliest childhood memories include trips to the Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, to the Smithsonian's Institution's Air and Space Museum, and to air shows at Bolling Air Force Base and Norfolk Naval Air Station. His father, Alfred Deptula, had joined the air arm as an aviation cadet in 1943 and became an aircraft maintenance officer on B-24's and B-29's, serving in the Pacific theater during World War II. After the war, the elder Deptula became a professor of structural engineering at Cleveland State, but rejoined the Air Force in the midst of the Korean War, staying on for a full career and retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1976.

From his traditional and conservative upbringing in the 1950s and 60s, Deptula developed a humble appreciation for honor, truth, and service. His mother and father instilled a sense of needing to contribute to the greater good. He grasped the example set by his father in being more than a service provider. There was a desire "to contribute to the advancement of the nation in a technological sense," to add "value."¹ Throughout his life, Deptula's father was a sounding board and critic of emerging ideas and "without a

¹ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

doubt was an enormous influence” on his intellectual development.² His father was an avid reader and encouraged the same habit in his son. For Deptula, following in the footsteps of his father was idealistic. His father had set an example of excellence and he wanted to emulate it. In addition, his father was instrumental in exposing him to military history, adventures in aviation, and even weapons-effectiveness manuals. In the summer of 1961, when the Deptula family went on a weekend camping trip, young Dave took a ribbing from his friend’s Mother, who wondered why a nine-year-old took a guided-missile handbook for reading material on a camping trip. Dreaming of wild aerial adventures became an early passion for Deptula. With a desire to learn and with eyes looking skyward, a teenaged Deptula dreamt of space and becoming an astronaut.³

His father, a weekly regular at the base library, often took Dave with him. At the library, Deptula first read *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, edited by Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate. Without claiming to have read its entire seven volumes, Deptula recalled the pleasure in just opening up any section, reading a paragraph or two, and then getting lost in his thoughts of adventure. During weekend road trips with his parents to Native American art shows across the American southwest, he entertained himself with Craven and Cate’s airpower history.⁴

In junior high school his father brought him a copy of *No Guts...No Glory* by Major Frederick Blesse that sparked an inner desire for aerial combat along with the dream of space flight.⁵ Deptula’s exposure to air war expanded again when he read *Black Thursday* by Martin Caidin, a book about WWII strategic bombing raids against Schweinfurt. In that story, the Air Force’s dogmatic focus on strategic bombing ran headlong into tough German defenses, and massive destruction from the air did not necessarily yield commensurate strategic results, an insight that propelled a good portion of Deptula’s intellectual musings as a grown man.⁶

² ———, "Interview 14 February 2011." This entire paragraph is a summary of interview comments. His Father currently lives with him, continues as an avid reader, and routinely engages with insight in debates about airpower, military roles and missions, and national policy with his son.

³ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011." This entire paragraph is a summary of interview comments.

⁴ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011." This entire paragraph is a summary of interview comments.

⁵ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011."

⁶ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011." Air theorists Douhet, Mitchell, DeSeversky, and Slessor ring through with his thoughts here during the interview.

His father fostered Deptula's intellectual curiosity and encouraged the pursuit of a liberal undergraduate education, where one learned "how to learn to learn" as opposed to a more technical degree, which valued particular skills or tradecraft. Accordingly, he majored in Astronomy at the University of Virginia. From his perspective, the Astronomy program provided an academic environment that afforded him the opportunity to build a liberal foundation of critical thinking and fulfilled the desire to look outward upon the universe.⁷ As a student and even as a junior officer, however, Deptula found writing and speaking to express his ideas difficult. An introvert with shades of shyness, Deptula learned to overcome this reticence when it came to interests that captured his attention and passion. The influence of his father made it natural for Deptula to read, learn, study, and think deeply about certain topics. Over time and as a mature man, Deptula did learn to write and to speak with strength and effect.

He continued to read about airpower with a curious mind through his college years. He recalled reading Jack Broughton's *Thud Ridge*, which chronicled air operations in Vietnam. In Broughton's account, bombing missions became predictable and routine, and focused on managing the means rather than achieving the ends of strategic and political effect. Together with his ROTC commander, a B-52 pilot, Deptula first examined the philosophical divide between strategic versus tactical airmen, giving him his first hints of a more unified concept of airpower that did not rely upon firewalls between its constituent pieces, an insight strengthened when Deptula read Curtis LeMay's memoir, *Mission with Lemay: My Story*, which portrayed a one-dimensional view of air-mindedness.⁸ Overall, *Thud Ridge* was Deptula's first window into limited war and how such conflicts might constrain the employment of airpower.⁹ It gave him an insight into the operational complexity and friction inherent in repeated, unimaginative operations.¹⁰

Deptula also recognized early that air-mindedness was not just a "rated" thing.¹¹ From an operational perspective, *Thud Ridge* made it clear that flyers had no monopoly on airpower ideas. Indeed, their cockpits sometimes constrained their vision to the point

⁷ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011." This entire paragraph is a summary of interview comments.

⁸ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011."

⁹ Jack Broughton, *Thud Ridge* (Friendswood, Tex.: Baxter Press, 1996), 14.

¹⁰ Broughton, *Thud Ridge*, 34.

¹¹ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

that they saw only sortie rates and bomb loads, giving short shrift to proper consideration for airpower's broader effect.¹² In the end, his breadth of reading and learning set the foundation for Deptula's fundamental belief that splitting and labeling airpower as either strategic or tactical created a false dichotomy and limited airpower's potential.

Deptula was one of ten pilot-qualified cadets from the University of Virginia's Reserve Officer Training Corp Detachment 890 in 1974 – and the only one of the ten to actually become an Air Force pilot. For him, becoming a military pilot was a “no brainer” and it furthered his goal of becoming an astronaut. But the Air Force was in the midst of the post-Vietnam drawdown, and there was a minimum wait of eleven-months for an open training slot. Ironically, this delay worked in Deptula's favor in two ways.¹³

First, he furthered his education with a Master's degree in Systems Engineering from Virginia, a field that he recalled many years later was defined as “the application of the physical and social sciences and mathematics to the solution of large-scale, complex problems involving man, society, technology, and the environment.”¹⁴ Here was a graduate program tailor-made for a budding air-minded theorist and strategist who had a propensity and desire to understand the relationship between small actions and their effect on larger systems. He recalled Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* as a work central to his understanding of relationships between and within scientific disciplines. For Deptula, changing paradigms became analogous with changing minds. It was not something most people did easily, but with critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis, shifting paradigms could increase knowledge and understanding. In particular, the process of systematically identifying causes previously perceived as effects captured Deptula's interest.¹⁵ From this early point in his life, Deptula strove to understand how and why things occurred when they did.¹⁶

Second, the wait for a pilot slot meant that when he did attend flight training in 1976, he was selected as the only graduate among three different bases to go straight into

¹² Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 144-45 and 212.

¹³ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011." This entire paragraph is a summary of interview comments.

¹⁴ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011." During the interview by the author, Deptula paused, smiled and rattled off the quote noting it was something that has always stuck with him.

¹⁵ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011.", Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 162.

¹⁶ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

the F-15, then a brand-new plane in the air arm's inventory. He won this honor because he was a Distinguished Graduate and recipient of the "Air Training Command Flying Training Award."¹⁷ If he had gone to flight training straight after graduation, he probably would have performed just as well, but his fighter aircraft option would not have been the F-15, as it had not yet come on line. During pilot training, while experiencing the dynamics of maneuvering fast jets, Deptula decided fighters were more challenging than riding in a spacecraft adhering to Kepler's laws, so he decided to focus on being a fighter pilot rather than an astronaut.

November 1977 marked Deptula's entry into the combat air force. In the 7th Tactical Fighter Squadron, then based at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, he became a flight leader in minimum time.¹⁸ He quickly felt at home in the fighter squadron, yet was much more than an average fighter pilot. Deptula embraced the squadron's close-knit social insularity and its competitive camaraderie.¹⁹ His ability to take the initiative, interact with others, and organize was "well above standards."²⁰ As a lieutenant, he worked at the Wing level accomplishing tasks normally held by more senior and experienced officers.²¹ He received the 49th Tactical Fighter Wing Commander's endorsement for the selective Air Staff Training program on every performance report while at Holloman.²² He was, in short, almost immediately identified by his seniors as an Airman "the Air Force must have to maintain viability" into the future.²³

This pattern continued with his next assignment to Kadena Air Base in September 1979. In his first year there, Deptula held both the squadron safety officer and chief of training positions, unusual rolls for a junior officer, as the squadrons of the 18th Tactical Fighter Wing transitioned to F-15 fighters. As the wing's initial F-15 safety officer, his program received "excellent" ratings and "his strong writing" and leadership set a new

¹⁷ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula," (in author's possession, 4 February 1976 to 1 October 2010).

¹⁸ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

¹⁹ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011," R. Michael Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals : The Problem of Air Force Leadership, 1945-1982* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1998), 12.

²⁰ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

²¹ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

²² "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

²³ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

standard for efficiency and organization.²⁴ As part of his duties as chief of training, Deptula was the lead project officer for the first Pacific Air Command F-15 Exercise Cope Jade in Korea. Moreover, his articulate style made him the sought-after briefer at 5th Air Force Headquarters, and he taught F-15 employment standards to the Royal Australian Air Force Chief of Staff and to the Royal Australian Chief of Naval Operations.²⁵ By the end of Deptula's first 18 months at Kadena, he was the 67th Tactical Fighter Squadron's "Top Gun" and "number one pilot."²⁶ As such, he became the F-15 Aerial Demonstration Pilot and traveled across the Pacific from Hawaii to Japan to Australia performing in air shows and interacting with international media outlets and the public.²⁷ He was an articulate, model, professional young Airman.

Already, his concept of leadership had taken root. Deptula believed leadership was getting people to accomplish and commit to something greater than they could do individually. In military organizations, he thought, leaders should provide guidance with a method of setting clear objectives, and then let the experts take the initiative. "Micro-management," Deptula believed, was an evil that suppressed "initiative" and had a "demoralizing" effect on people.²⁸ This attitude was the antithesis to the then current practice of withholding initiative and authority from lower levels whenever possible.

According to his seniors, Deptula was the "best Captain in the 18th Tactical Fighter Wing" and "number one pilot." In the fall of 1981, he attended the F-15 Fighter Weapons Instructor Course.²⁹ The school, established at Nellis Air Force base in the waning days of the Vietnam War, aimed to re-invigorate fighter pilot skills, which had atrophied in the decades since World War II. There, Deptula engaged in complex training missions to sharpen his flying and to hone his briefing, thinking, and problem-solving skills. In addition to the rigorous flying program at Nellis, Deptula participated in the school's intense academic program, from which he earned the Academic Award for his class.³⁰ The Fighter Weapons School, when Deptula attended it, was already a

²⁴ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

²⁵ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

²⁶ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

²⁷ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

²⁸ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

²⁹ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

³⁰ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

cornerstone for successful junior officers in a particular aircraft weapon system.³¹ Its graduates honed an improved ability to speak tactical grammar with ease and understand its logic in warfare, skills they were expected to take back to their operational squadrons. As a result, back at the 67th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Deptula became the squadron's Weapons and Tactics Officer and immersed himself in the larger issues of integrating the F-15 into theater war plans. He was a key member of the 18th Tactical Fighter Wing planning cadre working to integrate the F-15 into theater plans and coalition training exercises.

Throughout these early years, Deptula balanced the tactical demands to excel in the cockpit with a maturing desire to excel in thinking about airpower, something evidenced in the books he recalled were important to him at the time.³² Books by airpower publicist Billy Mitchell and visionary Alexander DeSeversky were among this lot. Both authors advocated a broader view and application of airpower, and both were enthusiastic appropriators of modern technology. Mitchell was a methodical and creative proponent of airpower who wrote to broaden the aperture of the American public.³³ Importantly, Mitchell was an early advocate of effects-focused operations. He believed airpower's range and speed shrank the world significantly and would, eventually, change the calculus of coercion in war—meaning when and how a nation might compel another to surrender or modify its behavior.³⁴ DeSeversky's aspirations for airpower were even more ambitious in many respects. He believed airpower could change society in major ways, and he thought airpower challenged traditional relationships between military weapons and the societies that employed them.³⁵ Taken together, these men, writing fifty years or more earlier than Deptula's reading, helped the young airman imagine what remained possible, but yet unreachable, in the world of airpower. Inspired and guided by their writings, Deptula continued to read and to think at a time when many of his peers

³¹ C. R. Anderegg, *Sierra Hotel: Flying Air Force Fighters in the Decade after Vietnam* (Washington D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2001), 50-52 and 54-55. Anderegg provides insight into the Fighter Weapons School in transition following Vietnam just prior to Deptula attendance. The post Vietnam changes in fighter training, tactics, and instruction were felt across Nellis.

³² "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

³³ William Mitchell, *Winged Defense : The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power--Economic and Military* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 3-23 and 101-02.

³⁴ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011," 26, 55, and 122, Mitchell, *Winged Defense : The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power--Economic and Military*.

³⁵ Alexander P. DeSeversky, *Victory through Air Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942), 213.

focused solely on maintaining hard-won tactical and technical proficiency. This, more than his considerable flying prowess, set Deptula apart from his peer group and hinted at what was to come.

In January 1983, Deptula embarked on the first of six Washington D.C. assignments across his 34-year career. In that month, he began a staff assignment in the selective Legislative Liaison Weapons Systems Division, Headquarters Air Force. There, he “coordinate[d] and articulate[d] Air Force positions on tactical programs and issues to Congress.” In his liaison duties, he was “articulate and effective” in communicating military concepts to civilian leaders in one-on-one discussions and committee hearings. In one instance, he presented an impromptu lesson in F-15 radar capabilities to members of the House Government Operations Committee, an effort that his military seniors believed precluded “reductions in F-15 procurement” that the committee had been contemplating. He learned much in this first Washington staff tour: the polarized and politicized atmosphere surprised him, as did the shallowness of some politicians’ understanding of defense issues, particularly as they related to airpower matters. But in the end, the tour provided ample practice translating technical and tactical details of weapons systems into the larger environment of national policy and defense, and in a manner that made the ideas accessible to non-experts.³⁶

Following his first exposure to the Pentagon, Deptula returned to fly the F-15 in the 325th Tactical Training Wing at Tyndall Air Force Base. There, he developed a weapons-and-tactics training program which received an “excellent” from the Tactical Air Command’s Inspector General. This, in turn, garnered for Deptula recognition that extended beyond Tyndall Air Force Base and reached Tactical Air Command headquarters at Langley Air Force Base. His training program catalyzed Tactical Air Command efforts to use F-15’s as part of the USAF aggressor program to keep pace with the capacities of potential American enemies. Moreover, as the “number one Captain” in the 325th Tactical Training Wing, he deployed as the lead transition instructor for

³⁶ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula." The quotes are direct selections and the remaining comments are the author’s synthesis of Deptula’s performance reports.

squadrons throughout the Air Force adopting the new F-15. As a result of this task, Airmen from across the Tactical Air Command received instruction from Deptula.³⁷

His impact on the Air Force grew considerably in this assignment at Tyndall. Major General Michael Dugan, then the Tactical Air Command Director of Operations and later a Air Force Chief of Staff, chose Deptula as the project officer to host and lead the first Tactical Air Command Weapons and Tactics Conference at Tyndall. Deptula's "positive energy and enthusiasm" toward tactical air-to-air employment and passion was "contagious to all those working for and around him." Deptula excelled at Tyndall and garnered the "Top Gun" award in both 1985 and 1986. The 325th Tactical Training Wing Commander, Colonel Richard B. Myers -- later a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff -- nominated him as the First Air Force's nominee for the 1986 Air Force Association's General Claire Lee Chennault Award, which recognized the outstanding aerial tactician of the year. Deptula's 112-page continuation training guide, which was the wing's basic guide for instructor training, was one major project that contributed to Myers' recommendation for the award. In addition, Deptula was always the first choice to instruct senior officers learning to fly the F-15, a group which included then Brigadier General Chuck Horner, the man who would later lead the air component in Operation Desert Storm.³⁸

As a young boy, Deptula's father had taught him to treat everyone equally, to never burn bridges, and not to leave behind a path of destruction.³⁹ It was not acceptable to roll-in like a bull in a china shop. It was important to possess competence, confidence, and compassion. These principles from his father resonated with Deptula during his first Pentagon tour and then again as an instructor at Tyndall. In ten quick years, Deptula had interacted with notable Airmen such as Dugan, Myers, and Horner. As Deptula himself recognized, in the ensuing years, these connections would matter.⁴⁰

In the summer of 1987, Tactical Air Command's Vice Commander, Lieutenant General James R. Brown, who had been Deptula's Wing Commander at Kadena, labeled

³⁷ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula." The quotes are direct selections and the remaining comments are the author's synthesis of Deptula's performance reports.

³⁸ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula." The quotes are direct selections and the remaining comments are the author's synthesis of Deptula's performance reports.

³⁹ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

⁴⁰ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011."

Deptula “the best Wing Weapons Officer in Tactical Air Command” and singled him out as a “special talent we need to groom in joint operations.”⁴¹ This helped ensure Deptula’s selection to attend Armed Forces Staff College, a posting that allowed him to extend his thinking into joint military operations and establish relationships with peers from the other military services.

His school year made strong impressions on Deptula, especially about how his fellow service brethren viewed and interpreted airpower and joint operations. He found a paradox between how his fellow officers interpreted air theorist Giulio Douhet and continental theorist Carl von Clausewitz. Most of his peers, it seemed, and many of his instructors, were likely to interpret Douhet’s *Command of the Air* literally, concluding the Italian theorist had little to say about war in the late twentieth century.⁴² This discounted Douhet’s transcendent insights about air superiority, the totality of warfare, the strength in land defense, and the potential opportunities in a three-dimensional battle space to avoid destructive wars of attrition. Perhaps most importantly, a literal reading of Douhet tended to obscure Douhet’s basic approach to warfare, which stressed speed, timing and mass to achieve strategic effect.⁴³

In contrast, his peers and teachers were likely to extrapolate Clausewitz’s focus on enemy armies into an entire philosophy of war which was applicable to every domain in every strategic context, a tendency reinforced by Michael Howard’s commentary of *On War* in the seminal English translation of the German work.⁴⁴ Deptula took many insights from Clausewitz, such as his exhortations to see war as an extension of politics, to recognize the complexity of political dynamics, to appreciate a reacting enemy, and to concentrate military efforts against an enemy center of gravity.⁴⁵ But unlike many others, Deptula also took Douhet’s philosophy of war to heart. He understood both theorists wrote from the viewpoint of a particular domain, and that it was “naive to apply either of them literally as absolute.”⁴⁶ In time, Deptula came to believe a third theorist, Sun Tzu,

⁴¹ “Personal Records of David A. Deptula.”

⁴² ———, “Interview 14 February 2011.”

⁴³ Giulio Douhet et al., *The Command of the Air* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 5-15 and 49-68.

⁴⁴ Carl von Clausewitz et al., *On War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 33, 40-41 and 58.

⁴⁵ Clausewitz et al., *On War*, 87 and 595-96, Deptula, “Interview 14 February 2011.”

⁴⁶ Deptula, “Interview 14 February 2011.”

explained warfare at the strategic level best.⁴⁷ He appreciated Sun Tzu's stress on intelligence to set the conditions for victory, and liked Sun Tzu's advocacy of military forces tailored to specific situations.⁴⁸ For him, Sun Tzu's ideas translated well into airpower, where aerial operations can influence the enemy to achieve the intended objective.⁴⁹ Airpower in this sense was for Deptula about describing effects, not about describing assets, a belief that became an increasingly important component of his ideas.

At the Armed Forces Staff College, Deptula also learned ideas of jointness did not have the same meaning among the services. For many of the instructors and students there, jointness seemed to be a "homogeneity of forces" and a mandate "for everyone to play" an equal role in every operation. Deptula began to formulate other ideas, recognizing the dynamic complexity in building professional competence in land, sea, and air forces. In his emerging view, each service provided their unique capabilities for the joint force commander, and jointness was about "the right force, in the right place, at the right time." Given any particular situation, the percentage of forces used would most likely not be equal across the services, but that was beside the point of jointness for Deptula, who aimed instead to have the right mix of forces present to influence a particular scenario.⁵⁰

Jointness in this sense demanded separate services with unique skill-sets. It also required a nuanced view of service capabilities inside each of the services, something that did not exist in the Air Force during the 1980s.⁵¹ By that decade, for instance, the Air Force's corporate position did not view the strategic use of airpower in anything other than a nuclear setting; there was literally no such thing as the conventional use of strategic airpower. Since World War II, airpower employment had either been tactical or strategic, but not both, and since the 1950s strategic had meant nuclear. The Air Force had even organized explicitly along these lines, setting up the Strategic Air Command

⁴⁷ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011."

⁴⁸ Samuel B. Griffith, *The Illustrated Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 125, 38-40, 52-53, and 83-92.

⁴⁹ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

⁵⁰ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011." The quotes and entire paragraph is a synthesis of interview.

⁵¹ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011."

and Tactical Air Command, whose sub-cultures had competed to control top leadership positions, control budgets, and dictate doctrine within the Air Force for decades.⁵²

This view tended to discount airpower's versatility, ran counter to the earliest theories of military aviation, and did not sit well with Deptula the more he thought about it.⁵³ The Air Force's 1980s Air-Land Battle concept, which envisioned airpower as a continental support function for Army corps operations, was a case in point. It seemed to support one important niche of American's security interests at the time—a conventional war with the Soviet Union in central Europe – but it did not leverage the full range and utility of airpower. Indeed, for Deptula, Air-Land Battle missed the essence of airpower that included a perspective to influence enemy centers of gravity across all levels warfare and across the entire battlespace in campaign development.⁵⁴

Deptula was also inclined, along with many other airmen at the time, to look at advances in technology to leverage airpower effectiveness.⁵⁵ His systems-development background helped him connect particular improvements in technology to broader improvements in airpower possibilities. In fact, as early as his first Pentagon assignment, Deptula had gained a greater appreciation for technology and its benefits in the application of conventional land-attack weapons. For Deptula, the application of technological advancements set the stage for airpower to improve the effectiveness of the joint force at the operational and strategic levels.

At the end of Armed Forces Staff College, it was time for a staff tour, and Deptula applied for a Pentagon position, where he had concluded the “decision makers” were.⁵⁶ In January 1988, with the help of someone he did not know at the time, but would later become a good friend, Lieutenant Colonel Bob Gaskin, Deptula got his assignment to the Directorate for Warfighting Concepts, Air Staff Doctrine Division.⁵⁷ Gaskin wanted to

⁵² Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals : The Problem of Air Force Leadership, 1945-1982*, 67-68, 106-44, and 66-75.

⁵³ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

⁵⁴ John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 1st ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 20-25 and 101-05, John A. Warden, *The Air Campaign : Planning for Combat*, Future Warfare Series; V. 3 (Washington D.C., Elmsford, N.Y.: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1989), 3-6.

⁵⁵ Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force*, ed. RAND Corporation., Second ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 155-64, Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals : The Problem of Air Force Leadership, 1945-1982*, 237.

⁵⁶ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

⁵⁷ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011."

leverage Deptula's operational F-15 and legislative liaison experiences to help develop airpower interdiction concepts for joint doctrine.⁵⁸ In Deptula's first months in the Doctrine Division, he was the Air Force lead action-officer writing Joint Publication 3-03, *Doctrine for Joint Interdiction Operations*, and wrote an article on the employment of conventional airpower at the operational level of war that was signed by then Lieutenant General Michael Dugan.⁵⁹ After six months, in the summer of 1988, Deptula received a Meritorious Service Medal, presented by Col John Warden, who had just become the Deputy Director of Warfighting.⁶⁰

Colonel Warden, an airpower theorist and strategic thinker, was a welcomed leader of the Directorate.⁶¹ In Warden, Deptula immediately found a kindred spirit. The two relished challenging existing notions and long-standing paradigms of war.⁶² Warden encouraged visionary thinking in his subordinates, and "marked the success of the Directorate in disapproved" staff proposals emanating from more hide-bound organizations.⁶³ Air-mindedness in Warden's Directorate was not strategic in means, but it was strategic in ends. Warden recognized Deptula as "one of the few officers" who understood "the use and value of airpower at the operational and strategic level."⁶⁴ Because of Deptula's extraordinary accomplishments, Major General Charles G. Boyd, Headquarters Air Force Director of Plans, recommended him for "definitely promote" below-the-zone advancement to Lieutenant Colonel, a further mark separating Deptula from the vast majority of his peers.⁶⁵ Even more importantly, after a year Warden nominated Deptula to work in the Staff Group, Office of the Secretary of Air Force.

When Deptula went to interview with Air Force Secretary Dr. Donald B. Rice for the job, he found a leader and airpower thinker motivated to define and communicate airpower for the masses, inside and outside the Air Force.⁶⁶ Rice made it clear Air Force strategists needed to articulate airpower's "support role to conventional ground

⁵⁸ Olsen, *Warden and the Renaissance*, 106.

⁵⁹ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

⁶⁰ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

⁶¹ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011.", Olsen, *Warden and the Renaissance*, 105-08.

⁶² Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

⁶³ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011.", Olsen, *Warden and the Renaissance*, 107.

⁶⁴ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

⁶⁵ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

⁶⁶ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011.", Olsen, *Warden and the Renaissance*, 127-28.

operations” in ways that did not diminish its unique character and which stressed jointness and strategic deterrence.⁶⁷ Some of this Deptula believed and understood; some of it he did not. Deptula “took it as a challenge to change” Rice’s mind in the latter instances, and worked to develop a holistic conceptualization of airpower, where strategic and tactical application of aviation were considered levels of effects, not distinct missions or types of planes.⁶⁸ In this new job, Deptula worked to facilitate the development of this air-minded thinking between his old Directorate and the Secretary’s Office. Deptula wanted to further the notion that Air Force airpower could serve as the “premiere defense service for power projection in support of the United States national security objectives.”⁶⁹

In the fall of 1989, the Department of Defense faced a budget shortfall of \$15 billion.⁷⁰ As each military service looked inward to justify its Cold War force structure, Deptula supervised a staff review for Rice on the Air Force’s fiscal position. In a brief labeled *Air Staff FY91-97 Program Adjustment*, Deptula noted the Air Force’s programmatic plan lacked vision, ignored other services, bifurcated airpower between strategic and tactical applications, and generally stressed aircraft procurement without a commensurate sense as to how those assets addressed national security objectives.⁷¹ By then, Deptula firmly thought the Air Force was one force, and airpower’s various functions were indivisible, but the attitude inside the Air Force reflected two separate major cultures (bombers and fighters), along with mobility, special operations, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. Each internal Air Force sub-culture understood airpower only to the extent to which it served its institutional interests.⁷² Deptula believed the Air Force, its Airmen, and its sub-cultures needed a single concept of airpower to match the dynamic pressures of budget justification and changing international security challenges.

⁶⁷ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

⁶⁸ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011."

⁶⁹ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

⁷⁰ David A. Deptula, "Global Reach-Global Power: Changing the Face of the Air Force," (1993), 3.

⁷¹ Deptula, "Changing the Face of the Air Force," 4.

⁷² ———, "Changing the Face of the Air Force," 1, Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Air Power*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 54-102.

With these beliefs Deptula set out to influence Rice's ideas on airpower. Rice had come to the Secretary position after a successful career with RAND. He had a reputation as a sound thinker whose ideas leavened broad bureaucratic and political exposure. All this tended to make Rice and Deptula kindred spirits, so much so that Deptula remembered his 1988-1992 time on the Air Staff as an "intellectual Camelot."⁷³ Eventually, Deptula's ideas found expression in Rice's seminal *"Air Force and National Security: Global Reach – Global Power"*, which Deptula wrote and which laid out the Air Force's basic posture for the 1990s.⁷⁴ Rice intended *Global Reach – Global Power* to fulfill many tasks: to explain airpower, its contribution to the joint force, and its contribution to national security; and to educate national security decision makers, which included not only civilian leaders and other military service leaders, but also Airmen.⁷⁵ In its preamble, Rice argued the "extraordinary international developments over the last few years have created the potential for a significantly different security environment as we approach the beginning of the 21st Century."⁷⁶ From there, *Global Reach – Global Power* captured the dynamic relationship between international change and the unique characteristics of airpower, which were and remain its "speed, range, flexibility, precision, and lethality."⁷⁷ The document questioned the nation's capacity to maintain long-term occupation garrisons throughout the world and asserted the capacity of airpower, with new and emerging technology, could maintain global awareness and force projection in lieu of those legacy forces. *Global Reach – Global Power* predicted that in the ensuing years airpower would emerge as the premier projection force, and the relative importance of non-kinetic and kinetic effects would alter to favor the non-lethal

⁷³ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011.", David A. Deptula, "Background on Global Reach Global Power Brief History," (in authors possession, 1992), Olsen, *Warden and the Renaissance*, 127 and 249. Hayden in this quote is referring to Colonel Michael Hayden who at the time worked in the infamous "Skunks" Directorate and would be Chief, Secretary's Staff Group after Desert Storm and Deptula's direct supervisor in that capacity. Later on Hayden would become Director of the National Security Agency and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Olsen asserts that during Rice's tenure at RAND he "had come to the conclusion that the single biggest problem the Air Force has was its inability to think conceptually." (127). Later on, Dr. Rice took this attitude and moved Colonel John Warden to Maxwell Air Force Base to command Air Command and Staff College in an effort to put a "leading Airpower theorist in charge of educating future Air Force leaders." (249).

⁷⁴ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

⁷⁵ Olsen, *Warden and the Renaissance*, 136.

⁷⁶ Donald B. Rice, "The Air Force and U.S. National Security: Global Reach-Global Power," (Washington D.C.: Secretary of the Air Force, 1990), i.

⁷⁷ Rice, "Global Reach-Global Power," 1.

uses of aviation, especially as those effects related to intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations. Specifically, *Global Reach – Global Power* outlined the ability for the Air Force to “become more useful to the Nation” in roles ranging from nuclear employment; precision kinetic strike; non-kinetic operations; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions; and in building partnership capacity.”⁷⁸

It was a bold document, and *Global Reach – Global Power* challenged many within the Air Force. It challenged traditional airpower concepts wedded to nuclear missions on the one hand, and tactical missions to support ground operations on the other. Some critics viewed *Global Reach – Global Power* as a different kind of parochial approach to military power, not a real vision of airpower.⁷⁹ Negative reactions to *Global Reach – Global Power* derived from its challenge to eliminate preconceived notions of different airpower sub-cultures. Air Force culture had for decades prioritized tribalism over air mindedness, and too many Airmen focused on protecting tribes.⁸⁰ This reaction to *Global Reach – Global Power* convinced some observers, notably Carl Builder in *The Icarus Syndrome*, to conclude Airmen had failed to embrace the profession of arms and a broader concept and understanding of airpower.⁸¹ *Global Reach – Global Power* advocated long-range conventional bombers and a tailored tactical fighter groups to meet a variety of circumstances, which was very different from rigid Cold War thinking and ran counter to the institutional interests of both the Strategic Air Command and the Tactical Air Command.⁸² With the document, Rice and Deptula challenged airmen to think anew about their service, its weapons, and its contributions to national security.

In the end, *Global Reach – Global Power* advocated a sense of, and use for, airpower closely aligned with national-security objectives. In order to do this, Deptula argued airpower capabilities across the kinetic to non-kinetic spectrum must become integrated into a holistic view. Ironically, this meant Airmen needed to return to the earliest principles of airpower theory and envision the employment of airpower, not for the sake of an independent air institution, but for strategic effects in support of national

⁷⁸ ———, “Global Reach-Global Power,” 5 and 15.

⁷⁹ Barbara J. Faulkenberry, “Global Reach-Global Power: Air Force Strategic Vision, Past and Future” (School of Advanced Airpower Studies, 1995).

⁸⁰ Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 230, 65, 84-87, Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals : The Problem of Air Force Leadership, 1945-1982*, 15, 28, 221, and 35.

⁸¹ Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 181-82.

⁸² Rice, “Global Reach-Global Power,” 8-9.

policy. This would become Deptula's charge as the 1990s dawned, as he left behind a junior career full of tactical brilliance and potential aplenty for what was to come.



Chapter 2

The Ideas

It is probably too early to judge the efficacy of precision air attack as a political tool; certainly its effectiveness remains hotly contested as this book is written. Yet much of this new debate has a familiar ring. Since 1918 airmen have sought to find and destroy a critical Achilles' heel in an opposing society, polity, or economy so as to win wars without fighting one's way through the mass land armies of previous eras. Through more than eighty years and the experience of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, the underlying philosophy and central implementing ideas of strategic bombing have changed remarkably little.

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Deptula jumped at the challenge and opportunity to test his ideas against the reality of war in the summer of 1990, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. By then, a small cadre of air-minded leaders, the core thinkers within the Deputy Directorate of Plans and the Secretary's Staff Group, had begun chipping away the barriers between the Strategic Air Command and Tactical Air Command and the separate notions of airpower such organizations belied. Rice had formally unveiled *Global Reach – Global Power* at Air University in June, 1990, and its exhortations to focus on strategic ends and not tactical means became ideally suited not only for Desert Storm but also for the range of military operations in the 1990s, including Operations Southern Watch, Northern Watch, Deliberate Force, and Allied Force.¹ When the Iraqi Army rushed into Kuwait City that August, *Global Reach – Global Power* served as an intellectual jumping-off point for Deptula and others as they contemplated how airpower could best serve the nation's interest. They also leaned heavily on another man's writing. Deptula's former boss, Colonel John Warden, had written *The Air Campaign* while a student at National Defense University in the mid-1980s, and if *Global Reach – Global Power* provided strategic

¹ Olsen, *Warden and the Renaissance*. Olsen uses the term as a renaissance of airpower and I agree it was such a time. *Global Reach-Global Power* was Deptula's foundation for the change in dogmatic approaches to airpower and a return to what Douhet and Mitchell originally envisioned airpower could do. Airpower's role was more than ground support or massive annihilation; it was both and all things in between. For the air theorist, including Deptula, airpower changes how one perceives reality.

posture for the Air Force at the dawn of a new decade, Warden's book provided an operational vision for the war against Saddam Hussein. In the book, Warden championed the concept of leading and sustaining military action through airpower, an approach out of sync with prevailing ideas of warfare centered on traditional, linear, and ground-centric war fighting paradigms.

When General Norman Schwarzkopf found himself without any good ground options in the sands of the Middle East in August 1990, he turned to other forms of warfare for ideas. A sizeable land contingent would not be anywhere near the Middle East for at least "8-10 months," so Schwarzkopf sought out American airpower for his immediate military solutions.² His theater Airmen, led by Lt Gen Charles Horner, provided the leading edge of military forces against a potential Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia. But Horner focused primarily on defensive operations—an inclination reinforced when Schwarzkopf assigned Horner duties as the forward Joint Force Commander. As a result, Schwarzkopf conferred with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Collin Powell for offensive air plans should the President decide to strike Iraq before American ground forces could reach the region.³ Both men then decided to ask the Air Staff for help. To many at the time, this smacked of rear-echelon meddling and brought back the ghosts of Vietnam. But for Powell and Schwarzkopf it had a great potential reward if air planners in Washington could construct a plan that was strategic in nature but not nuclear in execution, a concept that had atrophied in the prior decades, but with which Warden and Deptula had been working for some time in their own minds.⁴

Thus, the deserts of the Middle East became the proving grounds for the melding of old and new air-minded ideas. The task for developing a retaliatory or strategic air campaign within the Air Staff landed in Col Warden's directorate.⁵ The resultant Instant Thunder plan was a watershed, melding historical concepts of airpower, emerging technologies, and holistic concepts and matching them to a real-world crisis. Deptula's involvement in the Instant Thunder campaign planning was the product of an initial

² H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Peter Petre, *General H. Norman Schwarzkopf : The Autobiography : It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 301.

³ Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage : Planning the Gulf War Air Campaign, 1989-1991* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program United States Air Force, 2004), 32-33.

⁴ David A. Deptula, "Interview by the Author," (Oakton, Virginia: 12 March 2011), Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 32.

⁵ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 32-36.

brainstorming session with Warden and others within the directorate. Deptula saw the situation as an opportunity to help facilitate the realization of *Global Reach – Global Power*. With Rice's encouragement and full support, Deptula became Warden's right-hand man in translating his theoretical approaches into practical target effects.⁶

Neither Rice nor Deptula was aware at the time that Deptula would become a central figure in the planning and execution of the war. Deptula's value and contribution to the planning team, and ultimately in the campaign, was his ability to link strategic objectives and desired targeting effects. He also keenly understood the ability of airpower to adapt to a dynamic political environment. And so did Warden, who left Deptula in Saudi Arabia to lead the target development group. In this role, Deptula, with Warden's full support, encouragement, and direction, challenged traditional Air Force approaches to planning, intelligence, and targeting in a number of ways.

First, they facilitated an open communication and planning effort, which was a change from more narrow, stove-piped approaches to planning that had developed in the Cold War.⁷ With access to multiple intelligence sources, their target list grew beyond the symbolic targets put together by Horner's staff. The universe of potential targets also grew because Deptula proved adept at linking Warden's primary center of gravity, enemy leaders, to their associated command-and-control apparatus, effectively making targets 'strategic.'⁸

Second, Deptula envisioned a nascent effects approach to damage assessment that ran counter to established intelligence assessment procedures. At that time, intelligence officers measured effectiveness on levels of damage rather than effects on targets.⁹ Conducting integrated damage assessments against desired effects ran counter to the intelligence culture's norms.¹⁰ During the Cold War era, if it took four bombs to destroy a target, then planners and operators alike would deem the target operational until four bombs struck it, and overhead imagery showed the destruction.¹¹ Deptula's effects

⁶ Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011." The entire paragraph is a synthesis of the interview.

⁷ ———, "Interview 12 March 2011."

⁸ ———, "Interview 12 March 2011."

⁹ Richard G. Davis, *On Target : Organizing and Executing the Strategic Air Campaign against Iraq*, The United States Air Force in the Persian Gulf War (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program United States Air Force, 2002), 223-25.

¹⁰ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*.

¹¹ David A. Deptula, "Personal Notes of Operation Desert Storm," (in authors possession, 1991), 4.

assessment, on the other hand, required a holistic, indivisible, and qualitative approach to battle-damage assessment.¹² He believed a bomb impact on the top of a hardened aircraft shelter said little of the damage to equipment inside the hanger.¹³ But by mixing alternative intelligence collection methods, such as signals intelligence, with imagery intelligence, officers could confirm aircraft destruction inside the shelter. If a desired effect in Desert Storm was to prevent Iraq from defending its airspace, for instance, a pile of rubble was not the only way to assess whether that affect was achieved or not. For Deptula, the real key was not destruction—that was easy—but linking targets to desired effects to meet strategic ends. That was what the Instant Thunder plan promised.¹⁴

Third, to operationalize this promise, Deptula invented an effects-based flow plan that later became a robust master attack plan. In this endeavor, Deptula translated Warden's vision; he was the practitioner, Warden the strategist. Deptula's sense of the attack plan transformed Warden's concept of a strategic air campaign into a practical description for operational understanding.¹⁵ Like so many other things, Deptula built the master attack plan from a non-standard perspective. Rather than following the traditional sequential approach, he used the concept of simultaneity to design the Instant Thunder campaign attack plan focusing on all the critical target sets identified by Warden.¹⁶ He intended to maximize destructive effects with his simultaneous approach in three particular ways, yet still adapt to the strategic context as changes occurred. First, the attacks would create effects across all target categories in a short period. Second, the advent of stealth and precision technologies enabled targeting of key leadership and command-and-control targets from the outset of the campaign. And third, real-time effects assessment enabled continuous follow-on targeting, bestowing onto the plan the flexibility to adapt to the fog and friction of war.

On 10 August, 1990, Warden and others from the Air Staff briefed the Instant Thunder plan at Central Command Headquarters to Schwarzkopf and other leaders, using

¹² Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011."

¹³ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011."

¹⁴ Davis, *On Target*, 87, Deptula, "Personal Notes of Operation Desert Storm," 3.

¹⁵ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 57-59. Warden directed his planning team to make an "executable product" after he and General Alexander returned from the initial 10 August 1990 Instant Thunder presentation to Schwarzkopf.

¹⁶ Deptula, "Personal Notes of Operation Desert Storm," 2.

Deptula's first iteration of what would become the master attack plan.¹⁷ To Schwarzkopf's surprise, the strategic air campaign brief was not "from the Curtis LeMay school of Air Force planners – guys who think strategic bombing can do it all and armies are obsolete."¹⁸ Rather, Schwarzkopf was impressed with Warden and his team, finding them "to be flexible" thinkers.¹⁹ The Instant Thunder briefing invigorated an offensive mindset at Central Command Headquarters, and by the time Warden finished briefing and the team answered questions, Schwarzkopf had sketched out a four-phase offensive scheme.²⁰ It would start with the Instant Thunder air campaign followed by a suppression of air defenses and then an attrition of Iraqi forces by 50%. The first three phases of the scheme were air-centric, largely drawn from the work of Warden and his team, and met Schwarzkopf's immediate and long-term security needs and desires.²¹ The final offensive phase would be a ground invasion that would require "a whole lot more troops" and more time to plan.²²

Warden and others, including, Deptula, returned to brief Schwarzkopf with a refined version of Instant Thunder on August 17, 1990.²³ Deptula expected the trip to Central Command Headquarters to be the culmination of his association with the Instant Thunder plan. He recognized the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to accompany Warden on the trip. A lieutenant colonel Air Staff officer, attending a Combatant Commander meeting, which openly discussed, challenged, and presented ideas regarding the United States' largest combat deployment since the Vietnam war, was an unusual opportunity. During Warden's presentation, Deptula astutely followed the dialogue and answered targeting questions. Deptula's "listen, learn, and participate" approach which he had

¹⁷ Davis, *On Target*, 67-70, Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011.", Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 79-83, Schwarzkopf and Petre, *Schwarzkopf, It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 318. Warden presented the Instant Thunder plan to General Schwarzkopf on two separate occasions. First, an initial presentation on August 10 supporting Schwarzkopf's initial request. The second presentation provided a further detailed briefing on August 17th. The author's analysis is that the presentation by Col Warden on 10 August is what General Schwarzkopf is describing in his autobiography. The author also confirmed that Deptula did not attend the 10 August 1990 briefing, but the initial master attack plan slides were central to the presentation.

¹⁸ Schwarzkopf and Petre, *Schwarzkopf, It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 318.

¹⁹ ———, *Schwarzkopf, It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 318.

²⁰ ———, *Schwarzkopf, It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 320.

²¹ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 84-87 and 131, Schwarzkopf and Petre, *Schwarzkopf, It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 319-20. Putney's analysis describes the notion held by Schwarzkopf that he understood the potential for airpower to eject the Iraqi's from Kuwait, but he never felt it was possible without a ground invasion too.

²² Schwarzkopf and Petre, *Schwarzkopf, It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 318-21.

²³ Davis, *On Target*, 67-70, Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 79-83.

adopted during his first Air Staff assignment six years earlier proved worthwhile. Watching Schwarzkopf's mannerisms as Warden briefed Instant Thunder's master attack plan proved invaluable. When the meeting ended, Deptula was impressed with how well the presentation went. The Central Command staff seemed open-minded, and "a real appreciation for joint capabilities existed in their headquarters."²⁴ The Airmen were advocating a strategic air campaign to be sure, but the Instant Thunder plan also set the stage for a quick and decisive ground invasion.

In reality, the trip to Central Command Headquarters was the beginning of Deptula's brush with war. Following the brief on August 17, Schwarzkopf directed Warden to take a small team to Saudi Arabia to brief Horner. That day, on the return flight back to Washington D.C., Warden said to Deptula, "OK Dave, are you ready to go to Riyadh?"²⁵ Deptula enthusiastically accepted Warden's invitation, and that evening he met with Rice to update him on the trip and to receive his approval for his continued involvement in the planning effort. During the meeting, General Dugan joined them, and the three airmen discussed the overall air strategy and potential dates for execution.²⁶ In an 18-hour period, Deptula witnessed, heard, and discussed the Instant Thunder attack plan with the top two leaders of the Air Force and the theater Combatant Commander. Two days later Deptula was in Saudi Arabia, soaking in the comments and perspectives of Gen Horner, who would soon become the Air Force's first true joint forces air component commander. These were heady days for a lieutenant colonel.

Having previously flown with Horner during his time at Tyndall, Deptula had the advantage of an established rapport with the air commander.²⁷ This was something Warden lacked, and that both men would nevertheless need. For Horner, the ghosts of Vietnam and talk of strategic airpower were antithetical to his Tactical Air Command background.²⁸ He and his TAC staff tended to be suspicious of such talk, and were more comfortable thinking first in terms of sortie generation for defense and then Air

²⁴ Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011.", Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011." The entirety of this paragraph is a synthesis of the interviews.

²⁵ Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011."

²⁶ Davis, *On Target*, 80.

²⁷ Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011.", Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

²⁸ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 125-33.

Land Battle for offense.²⁹ Deptula was an accomplished tactical weapons officer himself, but he was not afraid to challenge self-imposed cultural divides. Neither was Warden, and the tension during Warden's August 20, 1990 brief to Horner was palpable. Horner's tendency to see the world through mutually exclusive tactical or strategic lenses conflicted with Warden's notions of a more unified concept of airpower.³⁰ When the briefing concluded, it was clear Horner understood the essence of the plan, but he asked Warden to return to Washington the next day, banished, it seemed, from further work on the air scheme. As for Deptula and other members of the team, however, Horner asked them to stay, indicating he saw much to like in the plan.

Now in theater, by August 21, 1990 Deptula had outlined specific tasks for the ad-hoc planning team Horner had assembled. He spent the next seven months translating an operational air attack plan into an air tasking order for the tactically-focused Horner. In so doing, Deptula addressed and attempted to mitigate the allies of friction, which he later identified as "inflexibility, dogma, and rigidity."³¹ This was not easy. Deptula's ideas of holistic airpower as postulated in *Global Reach – Global Power* had yet to change Air Force organization. The Tactical Air Command dominated Horner's staff and permeated Horner's thinking, and the Tactical Air Control System they used optimized airpower for close air support in a linear battle.³² The Air Force planning concept under this model failed to address the natural fog and friction of an integrated theater air campaign, something Deptula was convinced the Airmen would encounter during the fight.

So Deptula developed three remedies to mitigate friction and the inherent lack of integration caused by Central Air Force's traditional inclinations about airpower. First, he developed the master attack plan as a means to tie actions to desired effects and initially applied it to the Instant Thunder target sets. The master attack plan was a detailed document, translatable in the sequential joint environment, which captured the "operational blueprint for each day of the air campaign." Deptula noted early in Instant Thunder planning that the Air Force had a difficult time conceptualizing and

²⁹ Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011.", Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011.", Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 122-24.

³⁰ Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 127.

³¹ David A. Deptula, "Clausewitz, Friction, and the Air Campaign," (Washington D.C.: National Defense University, 1993), 16.

³² ———, "Linking Strategy to Tactics in Air Campaign Planning: Perspective and Process," (Washington D.C.: National Defense University, 1994), 5.

communicating its intent to the joint force. But with a single depiction of the attack plan, Deptula believed the joint force would better understand the intended effects. Second, Deptula's plans staff developed a three-day planning cycle, essentially working "three wars at any one time:" day one planning, day two processing, and day three current operations. The continuous execution of air operations against the entire spectrum of targets that Instant Thunder contemplated required a complex interaction between plans and execution, something that was new to Airmen in 1990, because existing procedures were designed simply to generate sorties for one war, one day at a time.³³ The process Deptula put in place to develop the master attack plan was designed to remedy this deficiency.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, Deptula instituted an intelligence-feedback loop to assess airpower effects. It was critical for effects-based analysis to cycle back into the planning group rapidly. Deptula recognized early on in Instant Thunder planning that as intelligence further amplified target knowledge, it created at once additional targets and more friction.³⁴ Deptula's solution was in the integration, or the unification, of operations and intelligence into a dynamic planning process, rather than the often-exercised pre-planned process which relied upon a 72-hour feedback loop. He knew once operations began, neither Horner nor Schwarzkopf would accept waiting three days to retarget or adjust to new conditions. Beyond that, Deptula mitigated the friction of narrow quantitative intelligence processes at Central Command and Central Air Forces by using Warden and his directorate as a reach-back analysis organization.³⁵ These officers back in Washington understood qualitative assessments and valued other forms of intelligence besides just imagery; in effect, the Washington D.C. team became an intelligence reach back-fusion center.

Taken as a whole, these changes promised to reduce the effects of friction at the operational and tactical level of war once the fighting began. A narrative of Desert Storm is beyond the scope of this paper, and has been well chronicled elsewhere. But virtually every account of the war has acknowledged the central role airpower played in the fight, as well as Deptula's nearly unique contributions to the aerial campaign. Before the war,

³³ Deptula, "Clausewitz, Friction, and the Air Campaign."

³⁴ ———, "Personal Notes of Operation Desert Storm," 4-5.

³⁵ ———, "Interview 14 February 2011.", Deptula, "Clausewitz, Friction, and the Air Campaign," 11-13.

analysts and strategists fretted about the possible length and cost of the campaign; predictions of many months and tens of thousands of casualties were commonplace. But the air war lasted a few weeks and the ground campaign a hundred hours, leaving the world in awe of American combat might. This was due to many factors and many people, but Warden and Deptula's brand of airpower could take a lion's share of credit.

Following Desert Storm, Deptula returned to Washington D.C., where he picked up where he had left off in the Secretary's office. He immediately authored Rice's *Desert Storm Lessons Learned* report for the Secretary of Defense, Richard Cheney. Deptula and other members of Warden's directorate then played a large part in the research and development of the *Gulf War Airpower Survey*, the most ambitious examination of airpower since World War II. In addition to these duties, Rice sent Deptula to brief airpower lessons to Congress, civilian think tanks, and National Security Council staffers. Most importantly, Deptula helped Rice shape the latter's proposal to disestablish the Tactical and Strategic Air Commands and stand up the Air Combat Command in their stead. This change, which came to fruition in 1992, was consistent with Deptula's long-standing advocacy for integrated airpower. As long as the Air Force's structure rested upon an implicit separation of tactical and strategic airpower, Deptula's ideas of the indivisible nature of airpower had no organizational home. Now, with the Air Combat Command, responsible for all the Air Force's fighting planes, his ideas could flourish.

Remarkably, Deptula did all this while still a lieutenant colonel. In those heady days of the early 1990s, he moved between the strategic, operational and tactical levels of airpower thinking like few airmen had done in the previous fifty years.³⁶ Deptula was arguably the central figure in changing America's understanding, appreciation, and application of airpower in the 1990s. Rice believed Deptula was "the most talented, most promising Air Force officer with whom I have worked during my time as Secretary of the Air Force. His theoretical and practical understanding of the concepts of airpower have changed the face of the Air Force and airpower thinking."³⁷ Deptula had become the most influential lieutenant colonel in the history of the United States Air Force.

³⁶ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

³⁷ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

In February 1992, Deptula departed Washington D.C. and returned to the cockpit of an F-15, this time with the Air Combat Command's 33rd Fighter Wing. During this tour, Colonel Gregory Martin, 33rd Fighter Wing Commander, selected Deptula to be both the team lead and flight leader of the wing's effort in the prestigious William Tell competition – the “Super Bowl” of air-to-air competitions.³⁸ The 33rd won the “Bronze” and this was testament to Deptula's aviation skills as he had been in a non-flying position for the previous four years. This was a brief assignment because an early promotion to colonel swept him away to attend the National War College in the summer of 1993. As a student, Deptula continued to develop and refine his observations and lessons from Desert Storm. In a course essay, he used five issues to tease out what he believed the key legacies of Desert Storm were, and where the Air Force should aim to be in the years ahead. These issues were: the joint air commander, the role of war objectives, emergent airpower capabilities, the pursuit of desired effects, and the nature and character of joint forces. He used the first three to explore links between airpower and strategy; and the last two to examine and challenge traditional notions of destruction and jointness. For Deptula, all of it was a prelude to change in the character of modern warfare.³⁹

First, for Deptula, Horner's decision to co-locate his headquarters with the joint force commander heralded the modern advent of a joint forces air component commander and enabled an integrated air attack plan, which proved invaluable for effective airpower employment. The physical proximity between the joint commander and Horner solidified unity of command and reaffirmed the long-standing notion that the best way to employ airpower was with centralized planning and integrated, decentralized execution, which enhanced the ability to plan and coordinate effects. The arrangement also required the air component leader to possess the capacity to analyze and adapt airpower, both kinetic and non-kinetic, to meet strategic ends.

Second, this close relationship fostered a laser-like focus on objectives, which in turn explicitly related strategy to tactics. In Desert Storm, being in close proximity to the joint task force commander made his objectives ever-present in air planners' minds,

³⁸ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

³⁹ Deptula, "Linking Strategy to Tactics."

which nurtured a master attack air plan that was closely related to those objectives and capable of dynamic air operations across all levels of war.⁴⁰

Third, although the desire to paralyze the enemy was not new to the Desert Storm air campaign, modern airpower capabilities such as stealth, precision, and space-based communications made this quest more possible than before. But for Deptula, these new capabilities were mute without advances in the intelligence-operations interface to improve judgments about what should be attacked, and how. For him, the increasing capability of airpower to affect targets was only as good as the intelligence used to develop the master attack plan. Modern technology had made destruction easier, but that was only half the equation; effects remained Deptula's touchstone for airpower prowess.⁴¹

His fourth concept was desired effects to subdue an enemy, a stark departure from the stress on destruction. Deptula believed an air arm that embraced the concept of desired effects could subdue an enemy without battle. In this argument, he relied explicitly upon the writings of Sun Tzu for an alternative strategic approach. Deptula thought airpower's capacity, both kinetic and non-kinetic, gave strategists alternatives to a single focus on destruction. His approach overcame the prescriptive sortie and weapon accounting procedures used to validate destruction according to commonly prescribed manuals. Instead, he advocated an effects versus a destruction-based approach that made explicit the link between sorties and missions on the one hand and objective and purpose on the other.⁴²

Last, Deptula weaved his ideas into a particular view of the joint force and joint operations. For him, a joint airpower force did not consist only of Airmen in blue uniforms. Marines flying fixed and rotary-winged aircraft were Airmen. Soldiers conducting aerial mobility and strike operations were Airmen. Naval aviators flying carrier defense or strike missions were Airmen. Officers from all services employing cruise missiles, remotely piloted vehicles, and space platforms were Airmen.⁴³ "Joint airpower is not single service homogenous in character," he wrote, and neither was it

⁴⁰ ———, "Linking Strategy to Tactics."

⁴¹ ———, "Linking Strategy to Tactics."

⁴² ———, "Linking Strategy to Tactics."

⁴³ ———, "Linking Strategy to Tactics," 38-39.

“about every force – in every place – all the time.”⁴⁴ The goal of jointness was not to incorporate all the service arms, in some equitable combination, in all operations; it was to employ the right force and the right time for the right effects. Deptula finished the essay giving his alternative philosophy for strategy development the name parallel warfare, which would become his siren song in the years ahead.⁴⁵

The National War College Commandant labeled Deptula “the most articulate advocate for airpower” in his class of 1994.⁴⁶ Deptula fondly appreciated the National War College experience, and recognized it helped hone his thinking on airpower, national security strategy, and military strategy development. His capacity to articulate and advocate for the effective application of joint airpower improved throughout his time in the course, as others challenged him on many fronts. His thesis advisor, the renowned historian H.P. Wilmot, helped Deptula work out ideas in clear prose and solid reasoning. And one of his classmates, a Marine named James Mattis, who later commanded Central Command as a four star general, proved a worthy stone against which Deptula sharpened his thinking.⁴⁷

Deptula stayed in Washington D.C, for the next year making good on the Commandant’s description of him as an articulate advocate for airpower. Starting in the summer of 1994, Deptula served as a professional staff member for The Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces, a group established by the 1994 National Defense Authorization Act. During his yearlong assignment, Deptula helped the Commission develop recommendations to update joint doctrine, assess deep attack capabilities, and leverage precision weaponry across the Defense Department.⁴⁸ Deptula began his work there by extrapolating his National War College essay to make doctrine recommendations. His knowledge of the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of the Instant Thunder plan and Desert Storm afforded detailed insight on the realities of deep-attack operations to Commission members and made credible his advocacy for precision

⁴⁴ ———, “Interview 12 March 2011.”, Deptula, “Linking Strategy to Tactics,” 38-39.

⁴⁵ Deptula, “Interview 12 March 2011.”, Deptula, “Linking Strategy to Tactics,” 40. Deptula added officers within Warden’s Directorate following Desert Storm used the parallel warfare term at times.

⁴⁶ “Personal Records of David A. Deptula.”

⁴⁷ Deptula, “Interview 12 March 2011.”

⁴⁸ “Personal Records of David A. Deptula.”

weapons.⁴⁹ For the Air Force, it was a stroke of genius putting Deptula in the assignment. His intellectual inclinations and previous operational and staff assignments were a good match for the Commission, and he became an influential leader of the staff. His Air Force seniors thought he was “a visionary” who understood “the subtleties of defense policy and how to realistically move policy forward;” his “astute strategic vision” enabled the Commission to challenge and “transcend staid and conventional thinking;” and his notions of joint warfighting were “instrumental in establishing the Commission’s core recommendation” for integrated joint forces, rather than a federated approach.⁵⁰ Partly as a result of Deptula’s efforts, when the Commission finished with its task the following year, it advocated for a concept of jointness that put the right force in the right place at the right time.

In 1995 Deptula published *Firing for Effect: Change in the Nature of Warfare*, which represented a synthesis of sorts of his contributions to *Global Reach-Global Power*, his service in Desert Storm, his National War College year, and his time with the Commission. In it, he explained how the Instant Thunder air campaign employed “a construct of warfare designed to paralyze Saddam’s control of forces.”⁵¹ This construct he called parallel warfare, which Deptula explained was “the simultaneous application of force (in time, space, and at each level of war) against key systems to effect paralysis on the subject organization’s ability to function as it desires. The object of parallel warfare is effective control of the opponent’s strategic activity.”⁵²

In Desert Storm, parallel warfare meant the targeting of multiple systems instantaneously across the entire battlespace. The actual targeting scheme drew heavily upon ideas of John Warden, who had already begun working out in his mind what would become an essay, *The Enemy as a System*. In that essay, Warden advocated thinking of the “enemy as a system composed of numerous subsystems,” and delineating a target schema using a five ring bulls-eyes depicting an enemy.⁵³ At the center sat enemy leaders, followed by systems essentials, infrastructure, civilian populace, and fielded

⁴⁹ “Personal Records of David A. Deptula.”

⁵⁰ “Personal Records of David A. Deptula.”

⁵¹ David A. Deptula, *Firing for Effect: Change in the Nature of Warfare* David A. Deptula, Defense and Airpower Series. (Arlington, VA: Aerospace Education Foundation, 1995), 2.

⁵² Deptula, *Firing for Effect*, 5.

⁵³ John A. Warden, “The Enemy as a System,” *Airpower Journal* Spring 1995 (1995).

military forces.⁵⁴ The subsystem targets attacked in Instant Thunder reflected Warden's 'inside out' centers of gravity, focused on the inner rings, and the result of the strikes was the near total control over the enemy's ability to act.⁵⁵ For Deptula, however, parallel warfare was more than compressing linear attacks in time; it was also about exploiting time and space simultaneously.⁵⁶ The pace of attacks by airpower created debilitating effects, robbing the Iraqis of an ability to adjust to changing conditions.⁵⁷ All this laid bare "the entire breadth and depth of Iraq."⁵⁸ In the war, no critical sub-system escaped attack.

In all of this Deptula took great care to distinguish effective control of an enemy from simple destruction of his means of war. "Control," he wrote, is "the ability to dominate an adversary's influence on strategic events," and does "not necessarily mean the ability to manipulate individual tactical actions."⁵⁹ To illustrate this, Deptula used as an example periodic Iraqi Air Force fighter sorties during the war, which in a traditional sense might have meant the Americans did not achieve the destruction of Iraqi air defenses. Yet, throughout the war, those few sorties, launched without adequate command and control, failed to detect any friendly aircraft, and flew beyond their local airfields only to flee to Iran. In an effects-based sense, the Americans had done what was needed to control Iraqi air defenses, even if they had not destroyed every piece of hardware on Iraqi airfields.

Distinguishing control from destruction was perhaps the core of Deptula's life-work in thinking about airpower. Over the course of the Cold War, with its possibilities for total war and nuclear exchange, destruction had for the Air Force taken over the whole mantle of strategy, leaving little room for any other concept. Yet to control the enemy would often have the same effect as destruction, and could in many instances be

⁵⁴ Warden, "The Enemy as a System."

⁵⁵ Deptula, *Firing for Effect*, 4.

⁵⁶ Thomas A. Hughes, "The Cult of the Quick," *Aerospace Power Journal* Winter 2001 (2001). In this article Hughes critiques Deptula and others for conflating speed with time and questions whether a parallel warfare construct necessarily always serves America's national security interest.

⁵⁷ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011." Deptula recalls reviewing an original copy of Colonel John Boyd's "OODA Loop Brief" left in the desk drawer during his first Air Staff assignment in Legislative Liaison, "but I never broke it down intellectually to study the details. Although, I understand his concept, and appreciate his argument to target the decision cycle of an enemy. His ideas to get inside an enemy decision loop are about paralyzing an enemy." (Interview)

⁵⁸ ———, *Firing for Effect*, 4, Warden, "The Enemy as a System."

⁵⁹ Deptula, *Firing for Effect*, 4.

had for less cost in blood and treasure. This was an idea found among the earliest airpower theorists, but it had become lost in the fifty years following World War II. Deptula, in arguably his greatest moment as a theorist himself, encouraged the Air Force to come home to this basic idea.

For Deptula, parallel warfare required a change in thinking about strategy. The concept of targeting the central nervous system and vital centers of the enemy was nothing new—Douhet, Mitchell, and other airpower advocates had earlier envisioned similar approaches. In fact, parallel warfare in general was not new. It had tactical precedents by 1870 in the indirect artillery fire during the Franco-Prussian War, operational precedents in the German use of Blitzkrieg in World War II, and strategic precedents in the Single Integrated Operations Plan for nuclear weapons during the Cold War. For Deptula, parallel war rested on new advances in technology and a renewed understanding of operational warfare to match its modern character. As Deptula put it, “Parallel warfare came from the combination of mature airpower technologies with a strategy based upon achieving systemic effects rather than individual target destruction.”⁶⁰ The two primary technologies that changed airpower were precision weapons and stealth aircraft. Precision weapons changed targeting in profound ways. They eliminated the requirement to mass an air armada in a sequential attack against a single target set, as was the norm in past conflicts. Without sequential targeting, an enemy no longer had the time to adjust defensive tactics and repair critical infrastructure.⁶¹ For its part, stealth technology made good the age old prophecy “The bomber will always get through.” Together, the two technologies made a small collection of modern aircraft more lethal than a 1,000-plane raid of World War II. Indeed, in Desert Storm the “F-117 stealth aircraft flew less than two percent of the total combat sorties, while attacking 43 percent of the targets on the master attack list.”⁶² The sanctuary of multiple linear defensive layers for high-value targets was no longer an advantage, and the cumulative effects of parallel warfare created an awesome asymmetric advantage.

⁶⁰ ———, *Firing for Effect*, 12.

⁶¹ ———, *Firing for Effect*, 6-7.

⁶² ———, *Firing for Effect*, 7.

Parallel warfare also required an operational appreciation for the complexity of planning for effects. Planning for traditional destruction had usually meant planning for wars of attrition and annihilation, and planners organized sorties and missions into a campaign of sequential engagements.⁶³ This, in turn, tended to mean campaign improvements could only come from more forces or more time or more resources. For Deptula, precision, stealth, and effects provided an alternative solution, where fewer, more capable weapon systems could render targets ineffective short of complete destruction. Parallel warfare focused planning efforts on desired effects, not upon the destruction of enemy systems and weapons, and for Deptula went beyond merely “wrecking” an enemy’s fielded forces.⁶⁴

All this bequeathed tremendous potential advantage to the nation that embraced parallel war. Deptula went so far as to write, “Parallel warfare changes the basic character of war. It has the potential to reduce deployment, forward basing, fighting, casualties, time, and forces previously required to win in war.”⁶⁵ This, Deptula believed, was nothing short of an assault on “a military steeped in traditions, paradigms, and strategies of the past.”⁶⁶ For him, the stakes were potentially high: “Seeing new technologies only as a means to modernize a preferred way to conduct war, rather than a means to exploit change in the nature of war, may prove disastrous.”⁶⁷ In the end, a parallel warfare approach challenged strategists to find efficiencies in both resources and time needed to achieve national security objectives.

Deptula’s *Firing for Effect* aimed for far-reaching influence. First, parallel warfare with precision, stealth, and targeting for effects advocated for alternative means to compel an enemy, and this challenged an Army predicated on more traditional means of victory. Second, effects-based targeting required highly capable weapon systems and ISR platforms, which would cost much money at a time when defense dollars were essentially constant, and this meant an inter-service fight over budgets. Third, parallel warfare would change how the Department of Defense organized and weighted joint forces, with an added emphasis on air assets. Given all the ways parallel warfare

⁶³ Clausewitz et al., *On War*, 177-82.

⁶⁴ Deptula, *Firing for Effect*, 10, Warden, “The Enemy as a System.”

⁶⁵ Deptula, *Firing for Effect*, 18.

⁶⁶ ———, *Firing for Effect*, 19.

⁶⁷ ———, *Firing for Effect*, 18-19.

challenged institutional norms, it would take all of Deptula's considerable persuasive skills to integrate parallel warfare into military plans and operations.

Since the advent of powered flight, Airmen have advocated for the independent employment of airpower to achieve strategic ends. Often, Airmen overpromised the true capability of airpower to achieve decisive independent results. The legacy of Douhet and Mitchell was in their singular focus on airpower as an alternative means to either sea or land forces. Although critics of parallel warfare saw much of these old sins in Deptula's ideas, parallel war was not so much an advocacy for airpower over the other services, but rather an advocacy for a different way to think about warfare. Only time would tell if Deptula's ideas would capture the fancy of the Air Force and other services – or if they would fade to nothing more than a footnote of history.



Chapter 3

Leading With Ideas

A prince or a general can best demonstrate genius by managing a campaign exactly to suit his objectives and his resources, doing neither too much nor too little. But the effects of genius show not so much in novel forms of action as in the ultimate success of the whole.

Carl von Clausewitz

A good leader endures, meaning that regardless of context, the leader is able to identify and arrange the key ingredients to achieve effective ends. Good leaders also influence situations all around them, not only those they control. Subordinates, peers, and superiors inside and out of their organization recognize the influence of the enduring leader.

In the last half of the 1990s and into a new century, Deptula persisted in the challenge to lead joint military operations and influence national security leaders. He continued to refine and develop his air mindedness against the backdrop of changing realities. He steadily influenced institutional organizations, planning processes, and operational procedures by helping to develop campaign strategies and to plan operations wherein airpower played a leading role to achieve American objectives. Whether civilian or military leaders accepted the influence of Deptula's *Firing for Effect*, or dismissed its applicability, the Deptula effect changed not just the Air Force, but military approaches around the world. Deptula's experiences led him to refine *Firing for Effect*, an effort that led to his *Effects Based Operations: Change in the Nature of Warfare*. By the end of this period, Deptula had added another seminal, core belief to complement his belief that airpower is indivisible: intelligence and operations are a holistic one, and represent the integrated essence of kinetic and non-kinetic airpower.

Clausewitz famously related leadership to military genius. In his section on genius, Clausewitz described a persistent military professional. The genius was a leader

who possessed a combination of courage, intellect, and temperament.¹ He described a genius as a comprehensive, inquiring, and complex thinker.² The genius took action to meet specific objectives in the face of fear and false perception.³ A leader was a thinker and a doer. A leader effectively navigated the complexity of politics and performed the simplest tasks.⁴

In the last years of the twentieth century, Dave Deptula did all that and more. Following his staff tours, Deptula returned to Eglin Air Force Base to take command of the 33rd Operations Group. There, he led Airmen in day-to-day operations fulfilling a range of tasks. Global airpower employment in the mid-1990s spanned the entire spectrum of evolving American national security strategies. At one end, airpower maintained conventional Cold War containment operations. At the other extreme, airpower was the primary means, through non-kinetic effects, to contain an aggressive regime over the skies of Iraq. In between, airpower played a critical role in a series of contingencies in Europe that highlighted the air arm's ability to respond to a dynamic and often unsettled diplomatic environment. In each of these instances—and as air theorists from Douhet to Warden had advocated—air superiority was a central component. As Deptula had prophesized in *Global Reach – Global Power* and in *Firing for Effect*, late-twentieth century American airpower was also an indivisible, adaptable, and flexible force, all of which often made it the preferred choice of policy-makers to support national security objectives.

Deptula's 33rd Operations Group concentrated on the air superiority mission. In his 18-months as a group commander, Deptula's F-15s executed six operational deployments to Southwest Asia. His group supported Operations Southern Watch and Northern Watch, which were the aerial campaigns to contain Saddam Hussein and deny him the full use of Iraqi warplanes to meddle beyond Iraqi borders or to harm ethnic and tribal minorities inside the country. Designed as a coercive tool, these operations demonstrated the capacity of airpower to shape the strategic environment in non-kinetic ways. In fact, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance played a leading role, and

¹ Clausewitz et al., *On War*, 101.

² ———, *On War*, 105-12.

³ ———, *On War*, 216-19.

⁴ ———, *On War*, 119.

air superiority fighters were an enabler for non-kinetic operations. There, in the skies over Iraq, the emergence of the no-fly-zone strategy matched the regional environment and was congruent with political and coalition politics following Desert Storm. The extent to which airpower helped contain the Iraqi regime for 12 years was remarkable, and the operations in essence showcased Deftula's parallel warfare methods to achieve effective control of an adversary with either kinetic or non-kinetic operations.

Airpower was a popular political and diplomatic tool to coerce adversaries in the 1990s. In addition to operations over Iraq, airpower played prominently in Operation Deny Flight, another no-fly-zone operation, this time over Bosnia, and Operation Deliberate Force, which followed Deny Flight and was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's campaign to temper civil strife in Bosnia. In the early stages of Deny Flight, air attacks on fielded forces yielded few tangible political results.⁵ This was also true of initial Deliberate Force operations, when NATO planners developed target lists which reflected a direct, attritional philosophy of war, and when mission planning focused more on destruction and less on control of an adversary.⁶ Over time, however, air planners developed different targets and identified entire enemy systems inside Bosnia that could be attacked in parallel and in accordance with Deftula's effects thinking, where an explicit link between military aims and political objectives existed.⁷ After that, airpower began to exert a powerful influence on the Bosnian Serbs, whose leaders, one respected scholar stated, developed an awe of American precision-guided munitions.⁸

All this airpower did, despite two factors working to mitigate its potential effects. Political leaders had ruled out a ground offensive, robbing airpower of a potential leverage point; and cumbersome multi-national planning requirements meant many targets, missions, and even sorties had to be approved by two distinct command chains, which tended to undercut airpower's flexibility and versatility. Nonetheless, by the end

⁵ Robert C. Owen, "Operation Deliberate Force, 1995," in *A History of Air Warfare*, ed. John Andreas Olsen (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2010), 202.

⁶ Richard L. Sargent, "Deliberate Force Targeting," in *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning*, ed. Robert C. Owen (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2000), 284-90.

⁷ Robert D. Pollock, "Roads Not Taken: Theoretical Approaches to Operation Deliberate Force," in *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning*, ed. Robert C. Owen (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2000), 431-32 and 40-46.

⁸ Robert Anthony Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 211.

of operations, the degree of unity and integration in the air war overcame this awkward set-up.⁹ The key to this unity was the use of a detailed master attack plan, of the like Deptula had pioneered during Desert Storm, which made it possible to communicate effects between the participating countries. At the strategic level, parallel warfare allowed a complex coalition led by competing international institutions to exploit diplomatic and military effects simultaneously. At the operational level, the master attack plan integrated coalition actions. Deptula did not participate directly in Deny Flight or Deliberate Force, but it was clear he had influenced airpower employment, even though he was not personally engaged in the operation.

Although airpower employment in the mid-1990s began to reflect Deptula's thinking, the Air Force itself still required him to validate his potential for higher rank in the time-honored way: through command. He passed this test. In 1996, the Ninth Air Force commander, General John Jumper, praised Deptula's "visionary goals" and his unit's "outstanding" operational readiness. So impressed was Jumper that he rated Deptula the Ninth's "#1 Operations Group Commander." This distinction won for Deptula an assignment back in Washington D.C. as the senior Air Force representative to the 1997 National Defense Panel, an assignment worked personally by the Air Force Chief of Staff, Ronald Fogelman. With that, Deptula's path to wing command and flag rank was open.¹⁰

Deptula was a good fit for this new job. The National Defense Panel charter from Congress required an independent assessment of the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review, which was the recommended process from Deptula's previous staff assignment with the Roles and Mission Commission. His analysis shaped the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review, and now he would evaluate it. The National Defense Panel Chairman noted Deptula's "intellectual honesty, joint perspective, outstanding dedication, and unrivalled leadership" made him an ideal choice to help "guide America's Defense."¹¹

As the senior Air Force representative to the Panel, Deptula was a central voice making recommendations for changing defense organizations, strategic concepts, and

⁹ Owen, "Operation Deliberate Force, 1995," 206-08.

¹⁰ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula." The quotes in this paragraph are direct selections of Deptula's performance reports.

¹¹ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula." The quotes in this paragraph are direct selections of Deptula's performance reports.

national security structures to meet future challenges. He had done all this inside the Air Force, and now he had his hand in the joint environment. *Global Reach – Global Power* had changed Air Force organization toward functional alignment, *Firing for Effect* had changed the Air Force's operational planning and challenged its strategic approach to military operations, and now his capabilities-based approach would influence the joint force.

Deptula's theoretical and practical experience brought a superb blend of expertise and insight for the panel's analysis and synthesis. As the National Defense Panel's study director for strategy development, future capabilities, and power projection, his effects methodology turned outward to change policy. The panel's report incorporated his capabilities-based approach to organizing and deploying a tailored force, and made pointed recommendation to use all elements of national power in military endeavors to achieve desired effects.¹²

By this time Deptula was a leader among his fellow airmen and within the highest circles of joint and civilian officials. His performance on the Panel solidified him as Fogleman's number one candidate for selection to general officer, a judgment shared by Fogleman's successor, General Michael Ryan, who stated in Deptula's final field grade officer performance report that he was "ready for our toughest challenge."¹³ That challenge, at the time, was command of the coalition and joint task force for Operation Northern Watch, which was an Air Force wing-command equivalent and part of the only shooting war America then had.

Once again, Deptula's sense of air-mindedness made him a good choice to lead a joint task force designed to achieve strategic effects with airpower. In this capacity Deptula worked directly for US Army General Wesley Clark, Commander in Chief, United States European Command. Unlike other Airmen who struggled to work with Clark during combat operations, notably General Michael Short, Deptula matched Clark's strategic intellect and equaled the latter's approach to balance political objectives and military aims, and in a way that not always stressed airpower's destructive capacity.

¹² Phillip A. Odeen, "Transforming Defense: National Security in the 21st Century," ed. Department of Defense (National Defense Panel, 1997), 35 and 45. The report focuses on transformation and the power projection of force with implications for alternative strategy development with an emphasis on effects, not destruction.

¹³ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

In the 18 months he commanded Northern Watch, for example, he directed the employment of kinetic weapons on only 80 different days, but non-kinetic operations constituted 85 percent of the effort to achieve military aims in support of the policy objectives.¹⁴

As Commander of Operation Northern Watch, Deptula had the task of containing a hostile Iraq regime, sustaining regional political stability, and deterring Iraqi aggression against the Kurds.¹⁵ It was not an entirely new mission for Deptula, who had supported Iraqi no-fly zone operations as the 33rd Group commander. Yet, now he was the commander, and the political context and geographic location of Operation Northern Watch made it a complex leadership challenge. Combined with the uncertainty of European and Middle Eastern strategic interests, Deptula was a military commander and an American diplomatic representative simultaneously.¹⁶ The situation was ideal for Deptula's parallel warfare ideas, which would animate his organization and typify his operational strategy.

As joint task force commander, Deptula led, set objectives, and measured effectiveness in accordance with his ideas. As soon as he took command, Deptula went about organizing Northern Watch to reflect his parallel-warfare concept. Linking strategy to task required him to improve the strategic relationship between his host nation, Turkey, and the task force.¹⁷ Here his ability to communicate in the strategic language of civilian politicians helped ensure that a new Turkish Prime Minister and Parliament renewed the task force charter at a time when such approval was not guaranteed.¹⁸ In addition, he brokered new rules of engagement to allow American

¹⁴ David A. Deptula, "Operation Northern Watch Personal Notes," (1999), 1.

¹⁵ Linda D. Kozaryn, "Patrolling Iraq's Northern Skies," American Forces Press Service, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=43185>. This news story provides an unclassified description of Operation Northern Watch from June 1998 when Deptula took command.

¹⁶ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula."

¹⁷ Official History, "Combined Task Force Operation Northern Watch, Contingency History February 1999 (U)," ed. United States Air Force (Air Force Historical Research Society, 1999), 36. (Secret) Information extracted is unclassified. The Operation Northern Watch organization chart displays the complexity of the command relationships with his Turkish co-commander and a United Kingdom liaison commander.

¹⁸ Kozaryn, "Patrolling Iraq's Northern Skies." As a follow-on no-fly zone operation to Provide Comfort, the Turkish Government agreed to operations with their involvement, but required re-approval of the Operation in its entirety every six months. The month of February 1999 is a good example of the diversity of senior political and military visitors: two United States Congressional delegations, the United States Ambassador to Turkey, V Corps Vice Commander, and two separate Air Chiefs of Staff. History,

planes more leeway to respond to hostile Iraqi actions.¹⁹ Most importantly, Deptula's parallel-warfare ideas allowed the task force to adapt to the dynamic political changes of competing strategic policies. At the time, Northern Watch was actively containing Iraqi forces from attacking northern Kurds, an ethnic minority in Iraq whose members were ancient adversaries of Turkey.²⁰ This was delicate, but Deptula's multi-pronged approach, where he stressed the non-kinetic aspects of airpower to Turkey and the kinetic aspects of airpower to other coalition powers, helped assuage the Turks and convince others of Northern Watch's continuing value to the region.²¹

During his command, Deptula's task force achieved effective control over northern Iraq with an integrated kinetic and non-kinetic approach, linked by intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations, that was new to the organization. In Turkey, he organized an operational process that resulted in real-time intelligence fusion. The unified intelligence effort included all coalition partners. For him, intelligence was not to be organized separate from operations. In his task force, intelligence was operations. For example, when Iraqi forces engaged the coalition, its response created effects not only against the weapon fired, but also against the supporting forces enabling the engagement. The process was not a tit-for-tat reaction, but an effort to paralyze the Iraqi forces and deter further engagements. All along, Deptula's intent was to put achievement of results in the hands of his Airmen. This process was in stark contrast to the hierarchical central control-process used in Southern Watch.

Indeed, Deptula's leadership philosophy empowered his task force officers to influence and shape the tactical Iraqi military infrastructure and to set conditions for strategic ends. Because of a different command structure and organizational methodology, in the judgment of one official report, Deptula's Northern Watch was able

"Combined Task Force Operation Northern Watch, Contingency History February 1999 (U)," 1. (Secret) Information extracted is unclassified.

¹⁹ History, "Combined Task Force Operation Northern Watch, Contingency History February 1999 (U)," 26. (Secret) Information extracted is unclassified. For example, on 3 February 1999 Deptula led discussions between Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States civilian and military leaders in an effort to work changes to the rules of engagement.

²⁰ Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2001), 12-13.

²¹ History, "Combined Task Force Operation Northern Watch, Contingency History February 1999 (U)," 1. (Secret) Information extracted is unclassified. On 2 February 1999, Gen Ilhan Kilic, Turkish Chief of Staff visited and received an Operation Northern Watch mission brief along with American Ambassador Parrish.

to maintain a greater degree of control over Iraqi airspace than the counterpart Operation Southern Watch, even though Southern Watch had greater force strength. His seniors recognized this unusual accomplishment, praising Deptula for a “great job commanding and leading” and applauding his “resounding success as a Commander.” Clark, in particular, labeled Deptula “a world-class act.”²² He was now a proven combat leader.

Deptula’s positive relationship with Clark was on the one hand a testament to ability at a time when other Airmen had difficulties with the Army general. On the other hand, Deptula’s task force was a side dish on Clark’s dinner plate.²³ Elsewhere in Clark’s area of responsibility, Slobodan Milosevic had renewed Bosnian aggression against Kosovo in spite of an arms embargo imposed by the United Nations, and Clark focused most of his attention there. Although Deptula was not directly involved with Allied Force planning or execution, his ideas influenced its operational strategy, just as they had done in Deny flight and Deliberate Force earlier in the decade.²⁴

Once again, political considerations all but ruled out a ground offensive, leaving an airpower strategy the leading candidate to achieve success.²⁵ At the same time, coalition restraints on the air campaign limited its ways and means in an effort to avoid negative effects, ensuring the airpower strategy would be more one of coercion and not destruction.²⁶ Clark established from the outset air operations needed to minimize collateral damage, avoid friendly losses, and preserve infrastructure.²⁷ All this made Allied Force an ideal laboratory for Deptula’s notions. Planners for the operation outlined two conceptual options, one being a quick and decisive strike intended to shock Serbian leaders, a plan in concert with Deptula’s concept of simultaneity with the use of

²² “Personal Records of David A. Deptula.”

²³ Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 226-27.

²⁴ ———, *Waging Modern War*, 46-74. In Chapter Three “To Dayton and Back,” his account of working on the Joint Staff during this time highlights the influence of national policy on military strategy. As a central figure in the first round of force employment, he was keenly aware of the role airpower played in shaping political decisions. The legacy of the Powell Doctrine for decisive overwhelming force had given way to policy formulation grounded in gradual escalation of military force.

²⁵ Tony Mason, *Operation Allied Force*, Olsen ed., *A History of Air Warfare*, 229.

²⁶ Dag Henriksen, *Nato’s Gamble: Combining Diplomacy and Airpower in the Kosovo Crisis, 1998-1999* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 72-81. Henriksen provides a synthesis of the evolution in American policy from Chairman Powell to Secretary Albright. While Powell thinks in terms of Vietnam shadow and gradual escalation with limited objectives, Albright did not bring the same baggage. He notes how European Fascist and Communist politics shaped her belief in taking an active role in spreading democracy.

²⁷ Tony Mason, “Operation Allied Force, 1999,” in *A History of Air Warfare*, ed. John Andreas Olsen (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books Inc., 2010), 229.

precision and stealth; the other resting on a series of escalatory steps to convince Serbian leaders to abandon their campaign against the Kosovars, a plan that also relied heavily on Deptula's notions of effects-based targeting and the non-kinetic effects of airpower.²⁸ In the end, Clark favored the less direct approach, but used an amalgam of both plans to subdue the Serbs. But in either instance Deptula's ideas guided planning and execution, even though he was not present in the command structure. Perhaps more than the operations he did have a direct hand in, this influence from afar was an indicator of how pervasive Deptula's ideas had become by the end of the 1990s.

Following his command of Operation Northern Watch, Deptula returned to Washington D.C for his fifth staff assignment in the nation's capital. He was the Director for Expeditionary Aerospace Force Implementation briefly, where he completed the Air Force's transformation from a Cold War garrison force to an expeditionary force reflecting the *Global Reach – Global Power* propositions he had penned ten years earlier.²⁹ Then, beginning in February 2000, Deptula carried the expeditionary airpower theme and parallel warfare ideas to his position as the Air Force Director, 2001 Air Force Quadrennial Defense Review. This review process, as intended by Dr. John White, who had been Chairman of 1995 Roles and Missions Commission, was to review strategy. The effort coincided with the four-year political cycle, adjusting strategy, budget, and program priorities to the changes in national policy that accompany a change in administrations.³⁰ It was a process designed to challenge service roles and missions—and the money that went with them—and promised high-stakes negotiation among the services about their capacity to support national security policy.

In this assignment, Deptula recognized the opportunity to lead an intellectual charge within the national security establishment, military and civilian, on national strategy. In the end, language in the review reflected a capability-focused approach to deal with an uncertain environment and recognized the need for transformation.³¹ For Deptula, the contingency operations of the 1990s were solid proof of the limited

²⁸ Mason, "Operation Allied Force, 1999," 229.

²⁹ Richard Davis, *Anatomy of a Reform: The Expeditionary Aerospace Force* (Washington D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2003), 1-10 and 35.

³⁰ Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011."

³¹ Donald H. Rumsfeld, "Quadrennial Defense Review Report," (Pentagon: Department of Defense, 2001), 13, 35, and 40-47.

applicability of legacy warfighting concepts and evidence that new approaches should dominate the Defense Department's procurement and strategic posture. He was largely able to carry this notion forward in the defense review, and for the first time, his ideas gained prominent placement in a high-level joint document. In the process, he earned high praise from his Air Force seniors, one of whom wrote Deptula "won the Quadrennial Defense Review for the Air Force."³² Deptula capitalized on the growing currency of his ideas by updating his *Firing for Effect* for a broader audience.

In 2001, he penned *Effects Based Operations: Change in the Nature of Warfare*, wherein he focused his attention on the effects concept. In it, Deptula returned to the theme of subduing an enemy without protracted close battle, by then a longstanding cornerstone of his thought. But throughout the document he conflated parallel warfare strategy with rapid decisive operations and effects-based operations.³³ Although these concepts were always closely related in Deptula's mind, they had not until this point become the same. On the one hand, effects based thinking exhorted strategists to think beyond the destructive product of combat and to concentrate on the political purposes of war, not solving the enemy's close engagement problem.³⁴ It demanded planners think clearly about the links between military operations and political aims, and to examine as best as they could second and third-order effects of operations.

At the highest level of analysis, the enduring essence of war, like the essence of human nature, include the "dominant tendencies" of reason, chance, and violence or the laws of physical, mental, and moral force, which do not transform.³⁵ At the next level of analysis down, it is in the manifestations of warfare, the seam between strategy and operations, like the manifestations of individual human character, that air-mindedness slowly transforms war's character. For example, in the shadow of nuclear weapons,

³² Hal M. Hornburg, "Distinguished Service Medal Nomination for David A. Deptula," (In authors possession, 2003), 1.

³³ Scott E. Caine, "Incorporating Effects-Based Operations into Air Force Doctrine" (School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2003). Caine's thesis accurately captures the essence of efficiency at the tactical and operational level as the primary focus of an effects-based targeting approach as an alternative to destructive targeting. From Caine's analysis the focus of effects-based operations is to maximize efficiency at tactical and operational level in an effort to conserve resources.

³⁴ Richard P. Hallion, "Air and Space Power: Climbing and Accelerating," in *A History of Air Warfare*, ed. John Andreas Olsen (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books Inc., 2010), 387.

³⁵ Clausewitz et al., *On War*, 89, J. F. C. Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1926), 220 and 325.

warfare has manifested its character to match limited policy aims in limited conventional and irregular ways. At a tertiary level of analysis, the evolving airpower tactics, techniques, and procedures provide constant change in the ability to mix the means of war in a way congruent with its manifestations. It is at this seam between the changes in manifestation of wars character, its ways, and the constant change in tactics and techniques, its means, that effects-based operations contributes. At its root, effects-based operations is about efficiency, it is about the efficiency of the means, an economy of force, to change the ways of a method for a strategy of paralysis or destruction.³⁶ The effects-based concept is in essence an operational art to link efficiently tactics and techniques to the changing character of warfare under the intellectual influence of theorists Basil H. Liddell Hart and John Frederick Charles Fuller, drawing from Hart's indirect approach and Fuller's law of economy of force—but also firmly grounded in Deptula's air-centric view of warfare. Parallel war and its corollary, rapid decisive operations, on the other hand, tended for Deptula to be the best way to translate effects on the battlefield to American political aims. In *Effects Based Operations: Change in the Nature of Warfare*, however, the terms became synonymous—to the point that the final version simply replaced parallel warfare with effects based operations interchangeably.³⁷ In this way, Deptula mixed an approach to war with an efficient means of conducting it; and confused the ends-ways-and-means discourse. It was a rare misstep for a strategist as good as he had become. Time would tell if it undercut his broader influence.³⁸

America's experience with war in the 1990s made fertile soil for Deptula's ideas. Desert Storm, the associated no-fly zone operations, and the Balkan operations all

³⁶ Caine, "Incorporating Effects-Based Operations into Air Force Doctrine".

³⁷ The authors comparative analysis of *Firing for Effect* and *Effects Based Operations* found that by page 3 the section title was rewritten to equate rapid dominant operations and parallel warfare as a single concept and on page 8 parallel warfare was a cut and paste replacement with effects-based operations, an action that occurred throughout the document 16 more times.

³⁸ Deptula's conflation of effects-based operations and parallel warfare notions helped bequeath, some ten years later, even greater misunderstanding of his ideas. In 2008, US Joint Forces Command Commander General James Mattis, USMC, directed his command to "no longer use, sponsor, or export the terms and concepts related to EBO." (James N. Mattis, "Commanders Guidance for Effects-Based Operations," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 51, 4th Quarter (2008): 108.) A close inspection of Mattis' objections to effects-based operations, however, reveal continuing confusion over the core of Deptula's ideas and an acceptance of portions of effects-based operations as Deptula himself outlined: "[E]lements of effects-based thinking," Mattis wrote, "if used for targeting against closed systems, can have a positive influence on planning." For more on Mattis' views, see Stephen Chiabotti, (Stephen D. Chiabotti, "Letter to the Editor," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 52, 1st Quarter (2009): 11. who believed "General Mattis thinks like an infantryman" and that "targeting, in the strict sense is foreign to the infantryman."

marked an important change in America's defense posture. Gone were the days where unconditional surrender culminated with an enduring occupation force, as was the case in Germany and Japan after World War II. Deptula believed America's response to international security and stability situations required an ability to respond and act quickly. Expeditionary power led by the advantages of airpower in "speed, range, flexibility, precision, perspective, and lethality – fit seamlessly in this strategic construct."³⁹ American success in Desert Storm and Allied Force had relied on a power-projection force that responded quickly to control the situation and change the strategic context. In both cases, parallel warfare with effects-based targeting led to positive political outcomes, and Deptula tried to institutionalize those methods and approaches in his work on the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review.

As Deptula finished that task, the terror attacks of September 2001 made urgent America's need for a power projection force to control a rogue Afghanistan regime. General John Jumper dispatched Deptula to supervise Operation Enduring Freedom air campaign planning.⁴⁰ In that role, Deptula immediately worked to integrate effects-based targeting into a parallel-warfare air-campaign design.⁴¹ In the process, a joint planning team integrated special operations teams into the airpower scheme to provide a unified capability and give the combatant commander a power-projection force capable of either sequential or parallel strategies, or both.⁴² Two months after the terror strikes, the simultaneous application of airpower and special operations against the Taliban paralyzed their ability to function. As Deptula had often prophesized, the Operation Enduring Freedom air campaign included a total joint airpower team. The integration of Air Force bombers, special operation gunships, Navy carrier-based fighters, and remotely piloted aircraft was the manifestation of *Global Reach – Global Power*. It took a decade and a

³⁹ David A. Deptula, *Effects-Based Operations: Change in the Nature of Warfare*, Defense and Airpower Series. (Arlington, VA: Aerospace Education Foundation, 2001), 24.

⁴⁰ Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011."

⁴¹ Michael W. Kometer, *Command in Air War : Centralized Versus Decentralized Control of Combat Airpower* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2007), 104. Even in the shadow of policy restraints from Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, the flexibility of an effects-based operational approach balanced the micro-management mentality with the need to empower forward forces to affect conditions on the ground for military aims.

⁴² Richard B. Andres, Craig Wills, and Thomas E. Griffith, "Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model," *International Security* 30, no. 3 (2005), Steve Call, *Danger Close: Tactical Air Controllers in Afghanistan and Iraq*, 1st ed. (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 25-41.

terrible attack on the homeland, but the asymmetric advantage of an indivisible and unified airpower joint force was clear. In Afghanistan, airpower integrated with a small, specialized land capability and collapsed a regime within weeks. Deptula's ideas were a central part of this success, and when he returned home, the future seemed bright.⁴³



⁴³ Andres, Wills, and Griffith, "Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model," 4.

Chapter 4

The Capstone

So the theorist must scrutinize all data with an inquiring, a discriminating, and a classifying eye. He must always bear in mind the wide variety of situations that can lead to war. If he does, he will draw the outline of its salient features in such a way that it can accommodate both the dictates of the age, and those of the immediate situation.

Carl von Clausewitz

The first decade of a new century witnessed Deptula's last three military assignments, at the Air Combat Command, in Pacific Air Forces headquarters, and as head of the Air Force's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance community. Into these jobs Deptula brought his longstanding ideas of airpower and warfare but, after September 11, 2001, he and his notions operated in an environment vastly different from that in which he and they had matured. How well Deptula and ideas such as parallel warfare and effects-based concepts translated into this new era is the subject of this chapter.

Deptula left the Combined Air Operations Center in late 2001 with a new assignment to Langley Air Force Base as the Director of Plans and Programs for Air Combat Command, the organization Rice had established a decade earlier with intellectual input from Deptula. With his belief in parallel warfare and effects-based thinking, Deptula set about codifying a unified force structure and organizational plan integrating Air Combat Command's kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities. Air Combat Command, in his assessment, needed to integrate the expeditionary capacity of airpower with effects-based thinking and organization. He believed airpower's ability to effect national security was vital to the American character of war, and it needed to remain adaptable to changes in the strategic environment—which after the terror strikes of 2001, most assuredly would mean active military operations far from American skies.¹

¹ David A. Deptula, "American Way of War Brief," (Oakton, VA: In author's possession, 2011).

For starters, Deptula identified five essential elements of America's character of war that emerged from the lesson of the 1990s. First, rapid deployment and sustainment of large air, ground, and naval forces to crisis hot spots, which was a capacity outlined in *Global Reach – Global Power*. Second, the presence of global logistics to support ground combat maneuver forces like those of Desert Storm. Third, dominating command of the air. Fourth, robust intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities for early warning and assessment of enemy and friendly operations. And fifth, initiative to take the offensive to an enemy at a time and place of American choice. For Deptula, air dominance was the linchpin of the five, the one without which America could not obtain the others. American opponents in the 1990s were technologically inferior, and US forces easily won air dominance from them. But as he squinted into the future, Deptula worried whether the Air Force could generate air-superiority effects if America confronted a near-peer adversary.²

In his Air Combat Command assignment, Deptula's leadership and influence reached beyond his sphere of control at Langley. To shape the entire Air Force and joint team, he worked to integrate effects-based concepts as a foundational piece of Air Force doctrine, which in turn would affect joint doctrine. As early as 1999, the Air Force Doctrine Center was incorporating Deptula's ideas. By 2007, Air Force Doctrine Document-2 integrated effects-based concepts throughout its text, and the chapter on operations began with a detailed explanation of the effects-based idea for airpower.³ In addition, he and others authored *Direct Attack: Enhancing Counterland Doctrine and Joint Air-Ground Operations* as a product of Air Force and Joint Forces Command integration on transformational ideas. In *Direct Attack*, Deptula formalized the concept of an aerial scheme of maneuver, where ground forces operated in support of the air forces in a power-projection strategy, much as they had done in Afghanistan.

In that war, small teams of special forces on the ground had supported airpower as it dispersed Taliban forces, worked to counter enemy depth in defense, neutralized enemy artillery fires, and denied enemy reserve forces their mobility.⁴ This new "Afghan Model," as it came to be known, upended the traditional roles of supported and

² Deptula, "American Way of War Brief."

³ Secretary of the Air Force, "Air Force Doctrine Document 2," ed. United States Air Force (2007).

⁴ Andres, Wills, and Griffith, "Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model," 16-22.

supporting forces in joint operations, making the Air Force the supported force. For Deptula, this new joint air-ground concept was “an air operation conducted as a scheme of maneuver against enemy military forces, irrespective of the presence of friendly surface forces, and directly supporting the joint force commander’s overall campaign plan.”⁵ As such, the Air Force had “experienced nothing short of a revolution in military affairs in its capabilities to conduct counterland operations.”⁶ For him, the integrated application of persistent intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, along with precision munitions and special operations forces, revolutionized air capabilities to achieve strategic effects.

Just before Deptula left Air Combat Command, America invaded Iraq in the Spring of 2003 as part of the Global War on Terrorism. The air campaign relied heavily upon Air Combat Command aircraft, personnel, and ideas. There, in the second Gulf War, Deptula’s ideas met a fertile environment. First, conventional land invasion forces of the Army and Marine Corps used airpower to clear the path from Kuwait to Baghdad.⁷ Air operations occurred in parallel, and included strategic attack, deep and shallow interdiction, and close air support to ensure the ground advance encountered as few Iraqi battle positions as possible.⁸ Second, in the Western Dessert, kinetic and non-kinetic intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance airpower combined with special operations forces to prevent the employment of weapons of mass destruction against regional allies.⁹ Third, in the North, airpower was the critical bridge to move a holding force of special operations and infantry forces to prevent the Iraqi Army from moving in additional forces to defend Baghdad.¹⁰ Finally, in the ultimate manifestation of kinetic effects with precision, the Joint Forces Air Component Commander, General T. Michael Moseley, employed stealth with precision weapons in an effort to decapitate the Iraqi regime prior

⁵ David A. Deptula and et al., "Direct Attack: Enhancing Counterland Doctrine and Joint Air-Ground Operations," *Air & Space Power Journal* vol 17 no 4 (2003): 10.

⁶ Deptula and et al., "Direct Attack," 8.

⁷ David Hathaway, "Interview by the Author," (Maxwell Air Force Base: 21 April 2011).

⁸ Hathaway, "Interview by the Author."

⁹ Call, *Danger Close*, 210-22.

¹⁰ Andres, Wills, and Griffith, "Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model," 23-27, Call, *Danger Close*, 223-33.

to the initiation of ground-combat operations.¹¹ Deptula's vision of parallel warfare and effects-based operations resulted in devastating the Iraqi ability to defend itself. Airpower had proved decisive with the joint team.

But the focus on parallel warfare and rapidity encountered limits as the conventional character of the Iraq war devolved into first unconventional warfare and then an insurgency. From the tactical to the strategic level, the kinetic factors of stealth, precision, and effects-based targeting struggled to match the changing character of the environment, but they did. The enemies in Iraq were evolving, adapting and highly malleable. As Deptula put it in his article *Toward Restructuring National Security*, in the 2007 winter edition of *Strategic Studies Quarterly*,

“Like a liquid that gravitates toward our weakest points, they aim to defy our grasp. Because they infest urban areas and hide among the civilian populations, finding the enemy has become a great challenge. In this sense, knowledge—having always been key—is assuming precedence over kinetics as the prerequisite “weapon” of war. As with every other aspect of the information age, victory will go to those who create and exploit knowledge faster than their opponents, and ever increasingly in ambiguous and uncertain situations.”¹²

In the early 2000's, technology allowed the collapsing of the kill chain from multiple platforms onto one and was evidenced by the find-fix-finish capabilities having been coalesced onto intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and strike aircraft like the MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper. This gave the coalition an asymmetric advantage, which once realized by the attrition-focused ground commanders that dominated in the leadership and control of the post major conflict phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, they began to combine an effects-based approach to counter-insurgency emblematic of Deptula's philosophy.

Airpower, along with the other services, had yet to adapt to this notion in late 2003 as Deptula departed his duties at Air Combat Command in the fall of that year, but

¹¹ Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 164-81. Chapter 9 “Dora Farms” provides a detailed analysis of the planning, decision calculus, and execution timeline of the attempted regime decapitation strike.

¹² David A. Deptula, “Toward Restructuring National Security,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* vol 1 no 2 (2007): 10.

would make that transformation in the later years of the first decade of the 21st Century. Only time would tell how well that transformation would work.

Deptula next took his ideas to Hawaii, where he shaped airpower's place in the Pacific Command. He became Director of Air and Space Operations, Headquarters Pacific Air Forces. Two years later, he was promoted to three-star general and reassigned as Vice Commander, Pacific Air Forces, which during an Air Force reorganization changed to Commander of the General George C. Kenney Warfighting Headquarters, the joint force air component commander for all US airpower in the Pacific outside of Korea. The unique characteristics of the Pacific theater made concepts of force projection critical. With the exception of forces assigned to the Korean Peninsula, all American forces in the Pacific theater were postured to mobilize for rapid projection. The American strategic focus, to include air-minded thinking, in the mid-2000s in the Pacific theater was to a degree reminiscent of the World War II strategic focus of the United States. As Europe was the primary focus for the Roosevelt administration, the Middle East was the primary focus for the Bush administration. In both strategic instances, then and now, leaders in the Pacific theater addressed strategic challenges with a unified-force strategy, not a continental dominant theme. And officers from no single force in the Pacific, because of reality of the environment, attempted to advocate for a single homogeneous force strategy.

If a holistic, inter-service, interdependent approach was the heart of Pacific force planning, then power projection was its soul. Deptula's perception of advanced technology and airpower matched these security requirements. In the past, available technology had generally given to the Navy the preeminent power-projection role in the Pacific, but at the dawn of a new century airpower, too, could span the Pacific with lethality. In Hawaii, Deptula capitalized on opportunities to strengthen airpower's contribution to the Pacific commander in conventional kinetic strategy and operational planning. He applied his concept of indivisible airpower to accomplish maritime interdiction and optimize theater-strike-task-force composition. Deptula challenged his fellow Airmen to evolve the theater-strike-task-force concept to a realistic combat

capability for the combatant commander, which changed the role of airpower in theater war plans and enhanced American deterrent and warfighting capability in the Pacific.¹³

Time and space in the Pacific theater were challenging enough without self-induced friction in force structure and organization. From his time at Air Combat Command, Deptula understood the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance strike-task-force concept for the Pacific theater was a response force, not a forward-deployed force package.¹⁴ As a result, plans called for a necessary delay before a combatant commander could use this capability. Bringing diverse Air Force organizations together, Deptula devised a scheme to sustain a forward strike task force in theater, eliminating this inherent pause. For example, in 2002, when a carrier strike group left the Pacific theater, bombers and fighters deployed forward as a deterrent option.¹⁵ As a result of that success, and his role in convincing the Air Force Chief of Staff of the value of assigning continuous bomber presence in the Pacific, since 2003 bombers and fighters, including the B-2 and F-22 stealth aircraft, have maintained an alert posture to project power from Anderson AFB, Guam.¹⁶ There, on the far side of the ocean, a potential peer competitor meant America's long-standing air superiority over adversaries could not be taken for granted, which was something Deptula understood well from his earliest days flying the F-15C.¹⁷

He found less success in other aspects of his service in the Pacific. Following the 2004 Asian tsunami, he helped lead the largest humanitarian airlift since the Berlin crisis. This joint team effort was extremely successful at the tactical level. However, Deptula's joint approach and effects-based ideas were not particularly effective in getting the designated Marine disaster response task force commander to organize an integrated command and control apparatus for the relief operation. The Marine Corps and Navy leaders were not amenable to Deptula's concept of jointness that unified different service

¹³ "Personal Records of David A. Deptula." This paragraph is the author's synthesis of Deptula's performance reports.

¹⁴ Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011.", Kristin F. Lynch et al., "Supporting Air and Space Expeditionary Forces: Lessons from Operation Iraqi Freedom," (Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, 2005), 17-18.

¹⁵ Lynch et al., "Supporting Air and Space Expeditionary Forces: Lessons from Operation Iraqi Freedom," 17.

¹⁶ Donald Rumsfeld, "D O D News Briefing - Secretary Rumsfeld and General Franks," ed. Department of Defense (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), March 5, 2003).

¹⁷ Deptula, "American Way of War Brief.", Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011."

components. The official study *With Compassion and Hope: The Story of Operation Unified Assistance*, compiled by the Air Force Historical Research Agency, described how Deptula struggled to integrate his air team at the operational and strategic levels with the joint task force. Deptula himself recognized after the mission that sticking with the internal Air Force mentality to run operations from Hawaii with only a forward liaison element enflamed inter-service tension.¹⁸ Unlike his Operation Northern Watch experience with Clark, this time Deptula's joint commander and peers did not sing his praises.

While leading airpower operations in the Pacific, Deptula also challenged Airmen back in Washington D.C. to keep championing airpower's asymmetric advantages, which he felt other senior officers had failed to do as the Iraqi insurgency lengthened. In a widely circulated memo to the Chief of Staff, Deptula wrote the inter-service environment in 2005 resembled that which existed before Desert Storm, "but with an even greater emphasis" placed on airpower as a supporting force.¹⁹ He thought other Air Force leaders had accepted old approaches to warfare irrespective of airpowers' ability to project power and respond to global security demands.²⁰ Deptula questioned where the thinking strategists able to articulate *Global Reach – Global Power* had gone. As the Air Force transitioned to a new Chief of Staff in 2005, he argued the emerging era of "go along to get along" needed to exit with the old guard, and that it was time for Airmen to "be air-centric because nobody else will be."²¹ For him then, as always, airpower transformation, dependent on innovative integration of information and aerospace technology, enhanced the combat effectiveness of the entire joint force.²² It was not the time to repress air-minded thinking. For Deptula, denying air-minded thinking in the

¹⁸ Timothy R. Keck, "With Compassion and Hope: The Story of Operation Unified Assistance," in *The Air Force Support for Tsunami Relief Operations in Southeast Asia 25 December 2004 - 15 February 2005*, ed. Pacific Air Forces Office of History (Hickam Air Force Base: Air Force Historical Research Agency, 2006), 24-25 and 29-32.

¹⁹ David A. Deptula, "Memorandum for Record: United States Air Force Planning Conference 24-27 July 2005," (in author's possession, 2005), 1.

²⁰ Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011."

²¹ ———, "Memorandum for Record: United States Air Force Planning Conference 24-27 July 2005," 1-3.

²² David A. Deptula, "Air Force Transformation: Past, Present, and Future," *Aerospace Power Journal* vol 15 no 3 (2001).

name of political correctness reduced Air Force capability, and he believed many senior Airmen were guilty of this sin, and he said so.²³

Worst of all, Deptula believed the consequence of this ‘get along mentality’ pushed other airpower leaders to focus again on air platforms, representing a retreat into the 1980s. It also resulted in a lack of air-minded approaches to national policy and military strategy development. In the summer of 2005, as Chairman Richard Myers prepared for retirement, of the nine geographic or functional joint commands, an Airman led only United States Transportation Command.²⁴ In Deptula’s mind, this meant the grammar of airpower alternatives to strategy had become lost in the logic of a one-dimensional worldview of sustained military occupation. As he worked to unify the indivisible essence of airpower in the Pacific, he saw airpower leaders in other theaters focus on assets and quantitative efficiency to support unconventional warfare operations. The Airman’s perspective on the ability to exploit the indivisible capabilities of airpower – its command and control, mobility, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, battlefield interdiction, and global precision strike – for the national command authority had atrophied.²⁵ In Deptula’s mind, air-minded thinking for national security was not about platforms and efficiency. It was about effects—but once the nation settled upon a long-term occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, his ideas found less reception in the joint arena.²⁶

In the summer of 2006, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen Moseley selected him to become the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence. After moving back to Washington, Deptula convinced the Chief to expand the position for not just intelligence, but for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. In this job, he led a community whose culture was known for its many sub-cultures and greatly in need of a holistic mindset. As a result, Deptula spent his final four years on active duty championing the cause of intelligence-operations integration. Just as airpower’s utility in military operations for the combatant commander had started with intelligence, the transformation of

²³ Deptula, "Memorandum for Record: United States Air Force Planning Conference 24-27 July 2005," 1-3.

²⁴ Suzann Chapman, "United States Air Force Almanac 2011," *Air Force Magazine*, May 2011, 110-12.

²⁵ David A. Deptula, "Personal Notes Titled: What Future Requirements Should the Air Force Focus on to Meet the Demands of the 21st Century Security Environment?," (In author's possession), 1-2.

²⁶ Deptula, "Interview 12 March 2011."

communication and aerospace technology continued to place airpower in a leading role for the joint force.

Deptula challenged both the intelligence and operations sub-cultures to change their parochial ways and to integrate amongst themselves. The strategic legacy of visionary Airmen to strike with precision anywhere in the world had become a reality of modern airpower, and the role of intelligence to facilitate the employment of precision weapons needed to become indivisible with operations in light of the speed at which information moved across the battlespace. Intelligence methods in the past, with their slower, short reach capacity, could afford to segregate methods and means. It was permissible for the exchange of intelligence to occur mostly at the upper levels of the hierarchy. Tactical integration between operations and within the sub-cultures was not required. However, Deptula's effects-based operations made real-time dynamic targeting not only possible, but the preferred way to dominate and control an enemy. Instead of the targeting cycle taking weeks in World War II, days in Viet Nam, and hours in Desert Storm, now the cycle from find, fix, and target often happened in minutes.²⁷

He was keenly aware of the struggles to integrate among intelligence sub-cultures. At the grass roots level, a small core of intelligence officers had worked to integrate effects with kinetic operations as early as Desert Storm, and the United States Air Force Weapons School had started a dedicated intelligence squadron in 1989. The Weapons School and war experience elevated the influence of this small core of air intelligence officers who spoke the grammar of airpower operations as they matured and moved into leadership positions. With their influence working from the bottom up, the segregation of intelligence and operations began to erode as Airmen institutionalized the lessons of airpower following Desert Storm.²⁸ The experiences of Allied Force, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom fueled this process, driving the Weapons School's 19th Weapons

²⁷ David A. Deptula, "Air Force I S R in a Changing World: Changing Paradigms While Optimizing "Low Density" To Meet "High Demand", (Oakton, VA: In author's possession, 2010).

²⁸ Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011." As an example, during the interview Deptula remarked on how a young Captain Eric Holdaway was one intelligence officer who spoke the grammar of operations during Desert Storm. Holdaway went on to Graduate from the Weapons School after Desert Storm, served as the squadrons Director of Operations in the late 1990's, and is now an Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Group Commander. He is an example of the small core of intelligence officers who understands and translates the grammar between the intelligence sub-cultures and operations.

Squadron to expand.²⁹ All this Deptula aided and abetted. It was clear to him that the modern environment required continuity and integration between the intelligence sub-cultures. By linking the sub-cultures in a single effort and a cohesive squadron, the diversity of specialized-intelligence Airmen could lead to a sum greater than their constituent parts.

As much as Deptula recognized a need to change the Air Force intelligence community, he also advocated for changes to the American national security structure in order to capitalize on emerging opportunities in information-age warfare. To this end, Deptula authored *Toward Restructuring National Security* in Strategic Studies Quarterly in 2007, where he argued that the reorganization of the Department of Defense was only one piece to a needed overhaul in national security organizations following the Cold War. The country needed a better dialogue between statesmen and military commanders, and between and among parochial service cultures. He believed information exchange, technology development, and political realities demanded a dialogue in the logic of war along the themes of his parallel-warfare and effects-based grammar. And for him, this new grammar spoke of joint interdependence, not single-service self-sufficiency.³⁰

In the article, Deptula addressed national instruments of power, joint interdependence, and intelligence knowledge as the three areas to improve unity. First, he advocated for an integrated use of a nation's entire power, including diplomatic, economic, and informational power, recognizing that the military instrument does not create effects in isolation.³¹ For him it was critical to deliver effects from all the instruments of power in speed rather than sheer scale "at particular points in time, often at less cost in blood, treasure, and national prestige," than military action alone could achieve in support of national policy.³² Second, he argued individual military services

²⁹ The author is a graduate of the United States Air Force Weapons School and served as an instructor in the 19th Weapons Squadron from 2006 to 2009.

³⁰ Deptula, "Toward Restructuring National Security," 5-6.

³¹ Deptula used the diplomatic, information, economic, and military instruments of power breakout commonly referred to in professional military education documents. For a complete description and reference of these instruments of power, refer to Harry R. Yarger, *Strategy and the National Security Professional : Strategic Thinking and Strategy Formulation in the 21st Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008). His book provides an in-depth review highlighting the complex interaction between the instruments of power in national security policy, an issue Deptula is keenly aware of and one that he believes is mis-understood by many in the Defense community.

³² Deptula, "Toward Restructuring National Security," 8.

did not fight wars, combatant joint force commanders did, and as such the services must focus on interdependence, not simply interoperability.³³ Deptula's conceptualization of jointness provided a menu of capabilities for the combatant commander to select, ensuring the right force was in the right place at the right time, an idea which he believed conflicted with more conventional views of jointness, where each service fought "its own battle in a carved out piece of space" where they were permitted to seek self-sufficiency—which was always the antithesis to Deptula's view of jointness.³⁴ Third, Deptula wrote the integrating link across every military domain was intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. As he entered the dusk of his career, Deptula came to believe ISR functions were the common denominator, which could and should integrate military operations across all the services---long the touchstone of his ideas.³⁵

Deptula always advocated for a new approach to national security organizations and strategy that matched the changing environment from the industrial age to the information age.³⁶ As he had since at least 1990, in his final three assignments, Deptula shaped, influenced, and advocated for change inside and outside the Air Force. This advocacy coincided with a major shift in American defense posture following the terror strikes of 2001. If in the 1990s his ideas rooted in fertile soil, in the 2000s, once the nation accepted enduring military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, his ideas found unsteady ground. The ideas themselves had not become poorer, and Deptula had changed neither personal nor professional strategies to convey his ideas. But the world had changed, and along with it the Air Force. Nonetheless, when he retired in 2010, his ideas had infiltrated most aspects of airpower thinking, had found their way into both service and joint doctrine, and had shaped nearly every major contingency operation undertaken since Desert Storm. Only time will tell if David Deptula and his ideas are a

³³ ———, "Toward Restructuring National Security," 11.

³⁴ ———, "Interview 12 March 2011.", Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011.", Deptula, "Toward Restructuring National Security," 12-13. Deptula stressed the negative impact on the linear mentality and land dominated influence of leaders on the current national security team. The inter-service battles for roles and missions to support national security policy have been subjugated to roles and missions in support of a single homogeneous land force.

³⁵ Deptula, "Air Force I S R in a Changing World: Changing Paradigms While Optimizing "Low Density" To Meet "High Demand"."

³⁶ ———, "Interview 12 March 2011.", Deptula, "Interview 14 February 2011."

book, chapter, or footnote of history, but at this close point in time, he is an iconic Airman as surely as Warden and Boyd, and perhaps even as Mitchell and Douhet.



Conclusion

This paper intended to explore David Deptula's influence on airpower and military operations. Deptula is an iconic Airman who shaped and influenced air-minded thinking during his career. His ideas embodied the continual process of understanding and applying emerging concepts and technologies, much as did the ideas of Douhet and Mitchell.

Chapter one revealed the intellectual development of a naturally inquisitive thinker. From Deptula's earliest childhood memories, he imagined a future supported with technological development. He embraced technological advancements, seeing the good in its steady forward march. Deptula also had an appreciation for history and a sense that each individual must contribute to society. With a liberal education as a foundation, he worked to understand the links between small and large systems, between individual actions and social behavior, and between and among states.

As an Airman, Deptula stood out among his peers from a young age. He consistently exceeded tactical flying standards and led his peers in operational airpower thinking. Never one to shy away from the opportunity to learn, he excelled as a student at the US Air Force Fighter Weapons School and embraced the challenges of competitive Air Staff assignments. Combining his ability to write with his ability to speak the language of tactical airpower and understand the language of military bureaucracy, Deptula became an invaluable thinker and proponent of airpower. But he was more than just a hard working staff officer; he was a strategic thinking Airman focused on the future, not the dogmatic confines of the past.

Chapter two captured the seminal event of his career and how it set the foundation for a view of warfare through an Airman's lens. In a single 24-hour period as a lieutenant colonel, he interacted with General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander in Chief, United States Central Command, General Michael Dugan, Chief of Staff, United States Air Force, Donald Rice, Secretary of the United States Air Force, and a host of other senior officials responsible for planning America's first war in two decades. Rarely if ever did a mid-grade officer have such access and privilege in a matter of such consequence. The experience of Desert Storm validated Deptula's interpretation of early air theorists, and

gave him the visceral experience of developing an air campaign. The success of the Desert Storm air campaign was an elixir for an air enthusiast and those looking to transform the post-Cold War defense department. With his close personal association and access to military and civilian leaders, Deptula changed minds and provided alternatives to traditional notions of force application and conflict involvement.

The uncertainty of the international environment following the Cold War pressured policy makers and military commanders to employ force in novel ways. Chapter three chronicles the 1990s, when Deptula's thinking gave both policy makers and commanders options to respond to conflict without expending political capital or large ground armies, which led to what one observer has labeled the airpower moment. Led primarily by airpower, America embarked in Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, and over the skies of Iraq to project power to coerce enemies for limited aims in what was for many, including Deptula, validation of some of the oldest—and some of the newest—ideas of airpower. As ideas of defense transformation pitted the parochial desires of services between one another, the US came under attack uniting citizens, statesmen, and commanders in 2001. Deptula was a leading figure in the Air Force transformation debate, and he was a leading player in the development of initial air operations against Afghanistan. The methods of the threat had changed from conventional military force-on-force to unconventional non-state actors, but he forced his airpower ideas into the tightly controlled, reach-forward command environment during the initial stages of Operation Enduring Freedom. His ability to endure as a leader and thinker, to apply integrative thinking to maximize short-term effects with long-term policy aims, found dissonance in the new character of war.

The final chapter traced Deptula's last decade in uniform, as his flight path adjusted to introduce a unified concept of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, and an embracing of remotely piloted aircraft—a term Deptula convinced the Air Force to accept as more accurate than “unmanned aircraft systems”—that the traditional “tactical” community had eschewed. Deptula tirelessly worked to transform the Air Force – and the entire military – from the inside out, which left him somewhat on the outs with senior-most leaders. His ability to shape basic foundational doctrine never ceased and will continue to shape Airmen for generations. He recognized the diversity and

uncertainty of the international environment, and worked to put the right mix of advanced airpower capabilities in the right place for the joint force commander. But as Deptula beat the drum of power projection and advanced technologies, the dominant theme of extended ground force occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan worked to push his ideas to the fringe. This was unfair, as the fullness of time will bear out. Whatever comes of his ideas in the future, his advocacy for technology and information knowledge provided the foundation to institute organizational change and unity of the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance communities. Their indivisible character provided a force-multiplying, dominant capability to the whole of American national security organizations.

The lasting effect of Deptula is a further evolution of air-minded thinking in an effort to maximize effects to achieve policy ends at minimum cost. His concepts apply across all domains for greater interdependency and unity of joint forces. Deptula's air-minded thinking is about taking advantage, while at the same time recognizing the limitations, of cognitive approaches to modern warfare and its weapons. From the lessons of early airpower theorists, Deptula extended air-minded ideas into a new century. Based on foundational principles, his air-minded thinking today continues to embody the radical paradigm shifting so necessary to ensure continued national defense. The ideas of kinetic and non-kinetic power projection of America's Airmen provides a strategic approach to achieve strategic ends, and to achieve maximum effects with the most efficient force. That was Mitchell's legacy, and it is Deptula's as well.

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